History of the First Baptist Church of Norristown, Penna.

Central BAPTIST
THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY
presented by

DR. ROBERT G. TORBET

KANSAS CITY, KANSAS

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HISTORY

OF THE

FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH

OF NORRISTOWN, PA.

FROM THE

Organization, 1832, to the Present Time, 1897

BY

ALONZO ALVIN DELARME

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TO

THE MEMBERS AND FRIENDS

OF THE

FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH,

WHOSE MANY KINDNESSES AND UNFAILING COURTESIES

HAVE MADE THE YEARS OF A BUSY PASTORATE

AMONG THE HAPPIEST OF MY LIFE,

THIS BOOK IS DEDICATED

IN LOVING AND GRATEFUL REMEMBRANCE.

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PREFACE.

The First Baptist Church of Norristown has had a remarkable and noteworthy history. It has long seemed to many that the events connected with the founding and building up of a church which has been such a potent factor in the propagation of Christianity in the community should be recorded in a permanent form.

Sketches have been written at different times, but this is the first attempt at a comprehensive narrative.

In the year 1892, Mr. M. H. McVaugh, Mr. I. N. Harrar, and Mr. George Wright were appointed a committee to revise previously written accounts, and complete the work up to date.

In 1893, Mr. Theo. Knabb was added to the committee. This committee held a number of meetings and something was done in the way of gathering statistics and historical facts.

In January, 1897, on motion of Dr. J. K. Weaver, who had taken great interest in the matter, the church appointed the writer to undertake the work and complete it as speedily as could be done in connection with his pastoral duties. The following pages are the result of the effort to carry out this design.

It would be impossible to acknowledge all the sources that have been drawn upon in the preparation of this volume. The church records, of course, have been the chief source of information. The Minutes of the Central Union Association and the files of the *Norristown Herald* have also been of great service. Interesting incidents in "The History of Montgomery County," by Theodore W. Bean, have been suggestive. Many important facts in connection with the lives of several pastors have been found in Dr. William Cathcart's "Baptist Encyclopedia," M. Auge's "Men of Montgomery County," and "The Life of Rev. Samuel Aaron," by L. C. Aaron. N. B. Randall, D. D., is entitled to much credit for letters from former pastors, and other information gathered by him in 1892 and published in *The Norristown Baptist.*

The author has received valuable suggestions and interesting incidents from persons who have had a personal knowledge of the history of the church, some of them from its beginning. Grateful acknowledgments are made to all these.

While the writer has tried to avail himself of every suggestion or criticism that might make the work the more accurate and complete, it is but fair to say that he has not slavishly followed any of these, but has allowed himself freedom in the collation, arrangement and presentation of all facts and data.

Although this work has been an arduous one in some respects, it has been at the same time a labor of love, with a desire to perpetuate and extend the knowledge of events of more than ordinary interest and importance.

Deeply sensible of imperfections in the presentation of many sections of this book, notwithstanding the painstaking care given to every chapter, it is now committed to the considerate judgment of its readers.

In sending this volume forth, the writer cherishes the hope that its perusal may promote a sincere love for the church whose history it narrates and beget an unswerving devotion to all her future interests.

ALONZO A. DELARME.

Norristown, Pa., July, 1897.

CHARTER.

"An act to incorporate the society known by the name of the Norristown Baptist Church, in the County of Montgomery.

"SECTION 1. Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, in General Assembly met, and it is hereby enacted by the authority of the same, That the society known by the name of the Norristown Baptist Church, in the County of Montgomery, is hereby erected into one body politic and corporate, in deed and in law, by the name, style, and title of the 'Norristown Baptist Church,' and by the same name shall have perpetual succession, and be able to sue and be sued in all courts of law and elsewhere, and shall be able and capable in law and equity to take and hold lands and tenements, goods and chattels, of whatsoever kind, nature and quality, real, personal or mixed, which are now, or hereafter shall become the property of the said congregation, by gift, grant, bargain, sale, conveyance, assurance, will, devise, bequest, or otherwise, by any person or persons capable of making the same, and the same to grant, bargain, sell, mortgage or dispose of, and the yearly value or income of the real and personal estate of said corporation shall not at any time exceed two thousand dollars, nor shall more than one hundred and fifty acres of land be at any time held or enjoyed by said Association, incorporated by this Act, nor shall it be lawful for said corporation to appropriate any of its surplus funds to any other than a charitable or religious purpose.

"SEC. 2. And be it further enacted by the authority aforesaid, That the affairs of said corporation shall be managed and superintended by seven trustees, five of whom shall be a quorum to transact business, to be chosen from the members of the said congregation, who shall choose by ballot from among their number, a president and secretary, and shall also choose a treasurer from among the members of the congregation who is not a trustee, and who shall, if required by the trustees of said corporation, give sufficient security for the trust reposed in him, and shall account to such

trustees for all sums of money received by him, or remaining in his hands at any time; and in case of the removal of the president, or any of the trustees, by death, resignation or otherwise, the vacancy or vacancies shall be supplied by the board of trustees till the next annual election, and the following named persons shall be trustees, until others shall be elected in the manner hereinafter prescribed, viz:—Phinehas Phillips, John Whitehead, Samuel D. Phillips, D. Sower, Jr., Geo. Eve, Jerome Walnut and B. F. Hancock, to continue in office until the first Thursday in January, one thousand eight hundred and thirty-four, on which day the members of said congregation shall elect seven trustees, to continue in office for one year, or until others shall be elected to fill their places, and the annual election of trustees shall be on the first Thursday in January in each year: Provided, always, that the same trustees or any of them may be re-elected.

"SEC. 3. And be it further enacted by the authority aforesaid, That all elections to be held in pursuance of this Act shall be conducted by three members of the corporation, who shall be appointed inspectors at the same place where the trustees are to be elected as aforesaid, by the electors then assembled, in such manner as may be agreed on by said electors, and the inspectors so chosen shall appoint one or more persons as their clerk or clerks, to perform such duties as the nature of the case may require; and any person not a member of said corporation, contributing yearly a sum not less than two dollars to the support of the said church, shall be entitled to vote at the elections of said corporation, and shall be eligible as a trustee, and each election so had as aforesaid shall be closed, and the number of votes for each person shall be ascertained; the inspectors of said election, or a majority of them, shall thereupon make out, under their respective hands, a return thereof, with the names of the trustees-elect, and shall deliver the said return to the secretary of the corporation, who shall within three days thereafter give notice in writing to each of the trustees-elect, of their respective election.

"SEC. 4. And be it further enacted by the authority aforesaid, That any person who shall hereafter be a member of said congregation shall be entitled to all the privileges, and subject to the same regulations as other members, and every member shall be at liberty at any time to withdraw from said corporation.

"SEC. 5. And be it further enacted by the authority aforesaid, That the said corporation shall have a right to make and use a common seal, with such device and inscription as to them shall seem meet, and to alter and revise the same at pleasure.

"SEC. 6. And be it further enacted by the authority aforesaid, That the said trustees and their successors shall have power to enact and enforce such by-laws and ordinances as may be proper and necessary for the regulation and transaction of the business of the said corporation, to establish and change the time and place of the annual election of trustees from time to time, as the same may be found convenient, or if said congregation neglect to elect on the day of the annual meeting, appoint any subsequent time on which said election shall be held: Provided, That public notice shall be given on Lord's day, immediately before or after divine service, and in such other manner as a majority of the trustees may direct, at least one week previous to the time and place of holding such elections: And provided, also, That said by-laws and ordinances shall not be inconsistent with the constitution and by-laws of this State or of the United States, and that the same be approved of by a majority of the members of the congregation, qualified as aforesaid to vote at any special meeting called by the trustees for that purpose, on notice given as aforesaid, and the by-laws and ordinances of the said corporation shall be fairly entered and registered by the Secretary, which book, and other records of the corporation, shall be open to the inspection of any member of the corporation at all reasonable hours, on application to the Secretary, and in case an election of trustees shall not be held at the time or times appointed, the corporation shall not thereby be dissolved: And moreover, The Legislature reserve the right to repeal, alter or amend this act, or any part thereof, at any time hereafter

SAMUEL ANDERSON,
Speaker of the House of Representatives.
THOS. RINGLAND,
Speaker of the Senate.

"Approved the eighth of April, A. D. 1833."

GEO. WOLF.

HISTORY OF THE FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH OF NORRISTOWN

CHAPTER I.

Organization.

The Baptist cause in Norristown had its beginning with a series of meetings held in the Court House and in the old Academy Building, during the month of November, 1832. These meetings were planned and conducted by the Rev. Leonard Fletcher, pastor of the Great Valley Church, Upper Merion, Chester County, Pa.

Mr. Fletcher had associated with him in these meetings William T. Brantley, D. D., pastor of the First Baptist Church of Philadelphia, and Rev. Dyer A. Nichols, pastor of the Roxborough Church.

The only churches in Norristown at this time were St. John's Episcopal, which was founded in 1812, and the First Presbyterian, founded in 1819.

The Baptists were little known in this section, the only churches in the county being the Montgomery, in Montgomery township, organized June 20, 1719, and the Lower Providence, in Lower Providence township, established in 1809.

On the seventh of November, 1832, the following notice appeared in the Norristown *Herald:*

"Protracted Meeting.—A meeting of several days' continuance will be held at the Court House, in Norristown, commencing on Wednesday, the 7th of November, at 7 p. m. Ministers of the Gospel, and other members of churches of every denomination, are affectionately invited to aid in the services and participate in the joys of the occasion.

"(Signed) L. Fletcher.

"*Pastor of the Baptist Church in the Great Valley, Pa.*"

In accordance with this announcement meetings were held every day for about two weeks, in the old Court House on Penn Street, and in the old Academy Building, DeKalb and Airy Streets. There were usually three services daily, at 10 a. m., 2 p. m. and 6 p. m. In those days a "protracted meeting" usually monopolized the time and attention of the people generally. Oftentimes stores were closed and business suspended during the hour of service, for a fortnight or more.

These evangelistic services, as they would be called to-day, were very largely attended. The Presbyterians generously offered their house of worship, and both this church and the Court House were unable to contain the crowds that flocked in from the towns and surrounding country. The *Herald*, in speaking of the meetings, said, "On Saturday evening the Court House and Presbyterian Meeting House were both crowded, and on Sunday both of the churches and the Court House were full." The other church probably being St. John's Episcopal.

These services being popular in nature, evangelistic in character and free from everything that was formal and stereotyped, they would naturally attract the attention and enlist the interest of a community unaccustomed to this simple mode of worship. But aside from this the men who were conducting the meetings were preachers of marked ability.

Rev. Leonard Fletcher, who seems to have taken the initiative step in this missionary enterprise, had been greatly blessed in his work at the Great Valley

Church. His pastorate there was marked by the abundant and continuous outpouring of the Holy Spirit. One, in writing of his work, says: "Day after day the house was thronged with rejoicing worshipers and weeping penitents. This continued with but little cessation during Brother Fletcher's entire stay. Many of you remember, with tenderest emotion, those precious days and the gracious words which proceeded out of his mouth. During the eight years of his labor in this pastorate he baptized more than four hundred into the membership of the church." His missionary spirit often led him outside of his own particular field. After establishing the church at Norristown, he went to West Chester and conducted a series of meetings in the Court House there that resulted in an organization which has grown into a large and influential church. After this he labored for twenty years in the South. And then, "as God heard the prayer of Jacob and brought him back to his father's house in peace, so he brought Brother Fletcher back in the evening of his life, that his flesh might repose in the midst of those he had led to Jesus, awaiting with them the resurrection of the just."

Rev. Dyer A. Nichols, of Roxborough, was a faithful worker and an earnest preacher and rendered valuable services both in these meetings and in the subsequent work of organizing and establishing this new interest. He frequently preached for the infant church until they called a pastor.

Brother Fletcher was particularly fortunate in having the assistance of such a noted preacher as

William T. Brantley, Sr., D. D., pastor of the First Church of Philadelphia. The Baptist Encyclopedia says of Dr. Brantley, "In Philadelphia his success was remarkable. In eleven years he baptized six hundred persons into the fellowship of the First Church, and he was instrumental in founding the Norristown Church. Dr. Brantley was a man of fine talents, his learning was profound, his classical scholarship was of the highest order, his voice had unusual compass and melody, and his heart went with his eloquent utterances, so that his oratory was overwhelming, his whole audience would be alternately bathed in tears or carried up to the third heaven in jubilant delight. Christ was everything in his heart and in his sermons."

Such were the talents and lofty qualities of the preachers who laid the foundation of the First Baptist Church in Norristown.

It is supposed that almost the whole community heard the Word as it was proclaimed by these earnest eloquent men of God, during this first revival effort. Seed was sown at that time whose harvest will continue to be reaped until that day when the Son of Man shall come in all His glory and the church militant shall become the church triumphant.

The meetings were a success, not only in point of the numbers attracted and the widespread interest incited, but in visible results as well. A good number professed faith in Christ and promptly confessed Him in baptism. Mr. Fletcher seems to have adhered strictly to the New Testament order. Like Peter, his

cry was "Repent and be baptized every one of you," and "straightway" those who believed were baptized.

There was very little machinery or routine in church methods among Baptists in those days. The simple mode of worship, the preaching, praying, singing and conducting services after the New Testament type, had already attracted the attention and enlisted the interest of the entire community, but the greatest event was the first baptism. On November the twelfth, five days after the first meeting, sixteen obedient converts were led into the Schuylkill river and "buried with Christ in baptism." This was probably the first Scriptural baptism ever witnessed in Norristown. The *Herald*, in commenting upon it, said that the ordinance was witnessed by about fifteen hundred persons. A few days later eleven others were baptized, making twenty-seven in all who "professed a good profession before many witnesses."

This series of meetings was indeed Norristown's Pentecost. It was not only the first real evangelistic effort of the Baptists, but the first genuine religious revival, conducted according to the New Testament and Apostolic pattern, by any denomination. Here was set in motion a mighty movement for God, whose results cannot be fully known this side of eternity. The event proved a real crisis in the religious life of the town and vicinity. It was the setting of that New Testament type and mould of doctrine which in after years proved effectual in establishing the spiritual worship of primitive Christianity in the midst of a strongly ritualistic community.

In the days of the apostles, as the disciples went from place to place, preaching the Gospel and baptizing believers, they organized churches in the various towns and cities, as the Holy Spirit gave them direction.

So it was here, as believers were added unto the Lord steps were immediately taken to organize a church. According to appointment, a number of individuals who had previously agreed to unite in the formation of a Baptist church in the Borough of Norristown, Montgomery County, Penna., assembled at that place, on Wednesday, December 12, 1832, for the purpose of being regularly organized as a church of Jesus Christ. On the day of the organization of the church a council, which had been previously called, assembled with the brethren and formally recognized the new body as a regular Baptist church. This council consisted of the following brethren: W. T. Brantley, D. D., of the First Baptist Church of Philadelphia; Leonard Fletcher, pastor of the Great Valley Baptist Church; Dyer A. Nichols, pastor of the Roxborough Baptist Church; Deacons John Pugh and Daniel Abraham, of Great Valley; Deacons William Rawley, Berriah Willis and Perry W. Levering, of Roxborough, and David S. Hall and John Dixon.

W. T. Brantley, D. D., was chosen moderator, and Daniel Abraham, secretary.

A letter was then read from the Great Valley Baptist Church, dismissing the following persons to be embodied in the new organization, viz.: Phinehas

Phillips, Joseph Abraham, Ann Abraham, Sarah Sturges, George Eve, Thomas Mann, Deborah Mann, George Crow, Ann Crow, Mira Moore, Mary Ann Bolton, Clarissa Eastburn, Hannah McCoy, Harriet Davis, Jane Eastburn, Mary Anderson and Ann Jenkins. Another letter was read from the Roxborough Baptist Church, dismissing the following members to be united in the new church, viz.: Joseph Marchman, Hannah Randall, Rebecca Stelle, Edith Ayers, Mary Ann Dougherty, Mary Marchman, Mary Price, Sarah Ann Ayers, Wilmina Randall, Almeda Ayers, Rebecca Davis, Mary C. Ayers and Emeline Ayers. The following had recently been baptized and had not yet united with the mother churches: Mary Stilagen, Martha Kugler, Louisa McGee, Susannah Kugler, Caroline McGee, Margaret Richafus, Sarah Ann Harris and John Buck. These thirty-eight persons were the constituent members of the new church.

The recognition sermon was preached by Dr. Brantley, from Matt. 8: 20, "The foxes have holes and the birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man hath not where to lay his head." The prayer was offered by Rev. Mr. Nichols.

The council met at the house of Mrs. Elizabeth Grosscup, on the corner of Main and Green Streets. From here they marched in a body to the Court House for the public services. Upon arriving at the Court House they found that the doors had been closed against them. Hereupon the exercises were held in the Court House yard, Dr. Brantley preaching the

sermon from the steps, outside the locked door. The next week the following statement from Dr. Brantley, as moderator of the council, appeared in the *Herald* of December 19 :

"A number of persons convened in the borough of Norristown, on Wednesday last, for the purpose of forming a Baptist church, when about fifty individuals [he wrote apparently from memory only; the exact number was thirty-eight], some of whom had been dismissed from the Great Valley and Roxborough Churches, and others recently baptized in this place, were solemnly united and embodied in church relation.

"The sermon on the occasion was delivered by William T. Brantley, of Philadelphia, *in the Court-house yard*, and the prayer was made by D. A. Nichols, of Roxborough. Leonard Fletcher, of the Great Valley Church, introduced the exercises preparatory to the constitution. The house occupied by Mrs. Grosscup was kindly offered for the occasion. The undersigned takes this opportunity, on behalf of himself and his brethren, to express a proper sense of the course pursued by those individuals who rendered it necessary that the exercises of divine worship should have an uncommon prominence. (Signed)

"Wm. T. Brantley,
"*Chairman of the Council.*"

George Frear, D. D., in describing the proceedings of this memorable council, in 1875, said : "No doubt these loyal Baptist ancestors of the Apostles were very thankful that they were on the outside of the locked doors, for oftentimes their Baptist fathers had seen the inside of fastened doors, for preaching the very same gospel. The spirit which tried to shut the Baptists out of New England would have shut them out of Norristown, if possible. Dr. Brantley must have felt nearer kinship to Baptists of 'ye olden tyme,' as he stood on the Court-house steps and preached from the text : 'The foxes have holes and the birds of the air have nests, but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head.' "

N. B. Randall, D. D., in writing of the event, in 1882, said: "All honor to those noble Christian men and women of fifty years ago! They had the courage to stand by their convictions amid persecution, and not only to march through the streets singing praises to God, but to stand out of doors, in the cold December wind, for His worship."

These brethren, who so courageously launched this noble enterprise for God and humanity, in the midst of such grave difficulties, evidently planned to make the little band strong against attacks from without and pure from heresy within by firmly placing the church on a platform of principles and doctrines from which it could never be moved by any opposition or persecution that might be directed against it.

The following questions which were propounded, together with the answers given, constitute the solemn compact under which the infant church began its heroic battle for truth and righteousness:

1. Do you all seriously and solemnly desire to be united as a church of the Lord Jesus?

Answer.—We do so desire it.

2. Do you maintain and believe those principles and doctrines usually held among the Baptist churches, viz, of three equal persons in the Godhead, the total depravity of all mankind by the fall of our first parents, eternal, personal and unconditional election, justification by the imputed righteousness of Christ, efficacious grace in the vocation of the elect, water baptism by immersion only, on profession of faith and repentance, the Lord's supper, a privilege

peculiar to the church, the final perseverance of the saints to glory, the resurrection of the dead, the general judgment and the future happiness of the saints and misery of the wicked alike, interminable?

Answer.—Our views and sentiments are, so far as we have received light and grace, in accordance therewith.

3. Are you resolved with the help of the Lord to perform to each other, and to the world about you, so far as you know and understand, the duties of church members; to make it your care and study to grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ; to watch over one another with tender concern, and to admonish one another with prudence and meekness; not to forsake the assembling of yourselves together, but to act faithful and constant in your attendance upon the meetings which may be held for the worship of God, except when hindered by ill health or some other cause?

Answer.—This is what we purpose and resolve.

4. Are you now willing to give yourselves to the Lord, and to each other, to devote yourselves as far as in you lies to the blessed work of advancing his cause and kingdom on the earth, and to make your light so to shine before men that they, seeing your good works, may glorify your father in Heaven?

Answer.—To this we are desirous of being devoted.

5. Do you acknowledge the duty of sustaining, by your contributions of worldly substance, to the best of your ability, the ministry of the Gospel, especially in the pastoral relation; to the cause of missions, of

Sabbath schools, of bible and tract societies, and other benevolent plans for the increase of goodness, virtue, righteousness and peace in the world?

Answer.—We so acknowledge our duty.

6. Do you now feel fellowship one with another, and will it be your study to keep the unity of the spirit in the bonds of peace?

Answer.—Yes.

After these questions and answers, it was agreed by the council that the brethren before them were ready for constitution. They were then solemnly commended to God by prayer, and afterwards received the right hand of fellowship, and were solemnly constituted and recognized as a Baptist church of Christ, under the name and title of the Norristown Baptist Church.

What a splendid foundation for the new enterprise. There is nothing unsound, weak or superficial in it. Such a solid foundation was well suited to give shape and comeliness to the superstructure. Only that which is sound in doctrine, scriptural in practice and spiritually symmetrical, ought ever to be placed in a structure whose foundation has been so deeply and securely laid.

These pioneer brethren built upon the strong, broad "foundation of the Apostles and Prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone." And if ever a little band of disciples needed a strong, clearly stated platform of principles and doctrines, surely it was the founders of the Baptist Church in Norristown. They needed, indeed, to be ready always

to give an answer to every man that asketh a reason of the hope. A bitter spirit of religious intolerance prevailed at this time in many sections of the country. In Norristown, there was a very strong feeling of prejudice against the Baptists.

There was not the denominational comity, in the early part of this century, that there is to-day. Bigotry and sectarianism were very marked. The full Gospel of religious toleration had not yet been preached in many sections of the country. The same spirit of intolerance, which imprisoned John Bunyan for twelve years in Bedford jail, and which exiled Roger Williams from the Massachusetts colony, prevailed to some extent in Norristown.

The first few months of the young church's history were quite eventful. It was not altogether unlike the beginning of the Apostolic church. They had the Pentecostal blessing; there were great numbers who flocked to hear the word. A good number believed and were baptized. The young church had also to face bitter opposition, closed doors, threats, persecution and all sorts of outrages. One evening, when the congregation had assembled for worship in the old Academy Building, there was an exhibition of maliciousness such as, doubtless, has seldom been witnessed in a Christian community. Mr. Fletcher had delivered, with unusual power, a very graphic sermon on the subject of "The Final Judgment." At the close of the sermon the congregation was singing, with great solemnity,

> "That awful day will surely come;
> The appointed hour makes haste
> When I must stand before my judge
> And pass the solemn test."

when a terrific crash was heard, which brought the services to a sudden end, and awakened in some minds the thought that the day of judgment had surely come. Investigation showed that miscreants had placed a keg of powder against the building and fired it by a safety fuse, just at the time when it would cause the greatest panic.

These early Baptists could not as yet thank God that they had "a place to worship where none dare to molest or make afraid." But such exhibitions of malice and intolerance only tended to intensify the zeal of these earnest disciples of the Lord Jesus. With consecrated loyalty to Christ and unswerving fidelity to His Word they went forward, nothing daunted by the opposition and hostilities which they encountered.

They were an heroic band, worthy to be the progenitors of a great church, whose power and influence should be widely felt, and from whose pulpit should be proclaimed the full Gospel of salvation, liberty and sobriety, by some of the most eloquent and fearless preachers of the nineteenth century.

At the first regular business meeting of the church, Phinehas Phillips and Samuel D. Phillips were chosen as deacons. It was decided that the ordinance of the Lord's supper should be administered the second Lord's Day in each month, and that the business meeting of the church be held the Saturday evening preceding. At this first business meeting a committee, consisting of Phinehas Phillips, Joseph Abraham, S. D. Phillips, David Sower and B. F. Hancock, was appointed to purchase a lot and make other necessary preparations for building a house of worship.

These brethren undertook at once their difficult task, and issued the following notice in the Norristown *Register* of January 10, 1833:

"The members of the Norristown Baptist Church and others who feel interested in the erection of a Baptist meeting house, at or near Norristown, are requested to meet at the Academy, on Saturday, the 19th of January, at three o'clock p. m.

PHINEHAS PHILLIPS,
JOSEPH ABRAHAM,
SAMUEL D. PHILLIPS,
D. SOWER, JR.,
B. F. HANCOCK,
Committee.

Pursuant to this public notice, a number of persons met in the Academy, when it was decided that the meeting house should be built in Norristown. Subsequently the committee purchased a piece of ground on Swede and Airy Streets, of Mr. Potts, for which they agreed to pay the sum of $1200. This lot comprised nearly the whole square between Swede and Cherry and Airy and Penn Streets. It proved a desirable and convenient location, and the wisdom and judgment of the committee who made the selection have been attested in the subsequent history of the church.

At this meeting, it was resolved that the church apply to the Legislature for act of incorporation. This charter, or act of incorporation, was secured, and approved by the Governor, George Wolf, April 8, 1833. The full text of the charter is found in the front of this volume.

At the business meeting held February 9, 1833, it was decided that the church should unite with the

Central Union Association. At nearly all these meetings, and frequently on Sunday mornings, candidates were examined and received into the fellowship of the church after baptism.

At the regular business meeting of the church on April 10, 1833, it was voted to seek a pastor, and Phinehas Phillips, Joseph Abraham and S. D. Phillips were appointed to attend to the same. Rev. Mr. Fletcher and Rev. Mr. Nichols continued to supply the church from time to time until a pastor was secured. Meanwhile, the work of building a house was pushed forward. By September, 1833, the basement was ready for use. Up to this time the services of the church had been held sometimes in the Academy and sometimes in the Court House. The Sunday school held its sessions in the school house. All these services were now held in the basement of the new church, although the entire building was not completed until the following spring.

W. H. JORDAN

Pastor from September, 1833, to April, 1834.

CHAPTER II.

Pastorate of Rev. W. H. Jordan to that of Rev. H. O. Wyer—
September, 1833, to July, 1834.

The committee appointed to recommend a suitable man for pastor reported from time to time having made inquiries, but were unable to recommend any one to the church. Finally, during the fall of 1833, Rev. William Hull Jordan, of North Carolina, during a trip north, preached for Dr. Brantley, in the First Church of Philadelphia. At the request of Dr. Brantley, Mr. Jordan soon after visited Norristown and entered into an arrangement with the church by which he was to preach for them Sabbath mornings, living in Philadelphia. He was to leave Philadelphia Saturday evening and return to the city the following afternoon. This arrangement, however, was not satisfactory and so was of short continuance. Mr. Jordan then agreed to remove to Norristown and to serve the church as regular pastor; but before this matter was effected, circumstances rendered it necessary that he should return to North Carolina. So, Mr. Jordan's connection with the church was a very short one. While he was the first to preach statedly for the church, and has generally been regarded as their first pastor, he was probably never constituted such.

His connection with the church came to a close probably in March, or the first of April, 1834—certainly before the twelfth of that month.

Rev. William H. Jordan was born in North Carolina, August 15, 1803. His mother afterward married Rev. Mr. Poindexter and became the mother of the noted Dr. A. M. Poindexter. Mr. Jordan was converted in 1823 and began preaching the same year. He is said to have been one of the ablest and most eloquent ministers in the South. A great revival began from his first preaching in North Carolina, which, it is claimed, resulted in the conversion of fully two thousand souls.

At a church meeting on January 11, 1834, a letter was read from the brethern at West Chester, referring to the constitution of a church in that place, requesting the attendance of Mr. Jordan and likewise a delegation from the church, whereupon Phinehas Phillips and J. Courtney and S. D. Phillips were appointed.

In February it was resolved that the church deem it desirable to hold a "protracted meeting" as soon as the meeting house should be finished, and five brethren were appointed, W. H. Jordan, Phinehas Phillips, Joseph Abraham, Geo. Eve and S. D. Phillips, to make the necessary arrangements for the same. At this same time it was recommended that the church take into consideration the propriety and necessity of forming a society to contribute monthly, or oftener, for the purpose of liquidating the debt on the meeting house.

FIRST CHURCH EDIFICE

The much needed house of worship was finally completed, and formally dedicated in March, 1834. The exact date when the dedication services were held is not known. Dr. Brantley, who had preached the sermon on the occasion of the church's recognition, was present and delivered the dedicatory sermon. Rev. Messrs. Fletcher, Nichols and Hall took part in the services.

The building was a plain stone structure, seventy feet long by forty-eight feet wide. It contained two stories, with a basement room forty-three feet square, for conference and Sunday school purposes, and cost, including the grounds, about seven thousand dollars.

The auditorium now being ready for use the protracted meetings commenced agreebly to the foregoing arrangements. These services were begun on Thursday, the thirteenth of March, 1834, probably immediately after the dedication exercises, possibly on that very day, in which case, the thirteenth of March would be the exact date of the dedication. The special meetings seem to have been largely attended and great interest was manifested. The preaching was by the Rev. Messrs. Brantley, Fletcher, Nichols and Hall. There were a number of conversions and thirty-three were added to the church.

The discipline at this period was quite rigid and members were frequently disciplined for the violation of the rules of the church, or for disorderly walk. The necessity of this, always unfortunate, must have been particularly disheartening to the church in its infancy.

At the church meeting held on the twelfth of April, 1834, it was resolved to seek a successor to Mr. Jordan, and Phinehas Phillips and S. D. Phillips were appointed a committe of correspondence. Rev. D. A. Nichols again supplied the pulpit until a pastor was secured. He was also present and presided at most of the business meetings of the church.

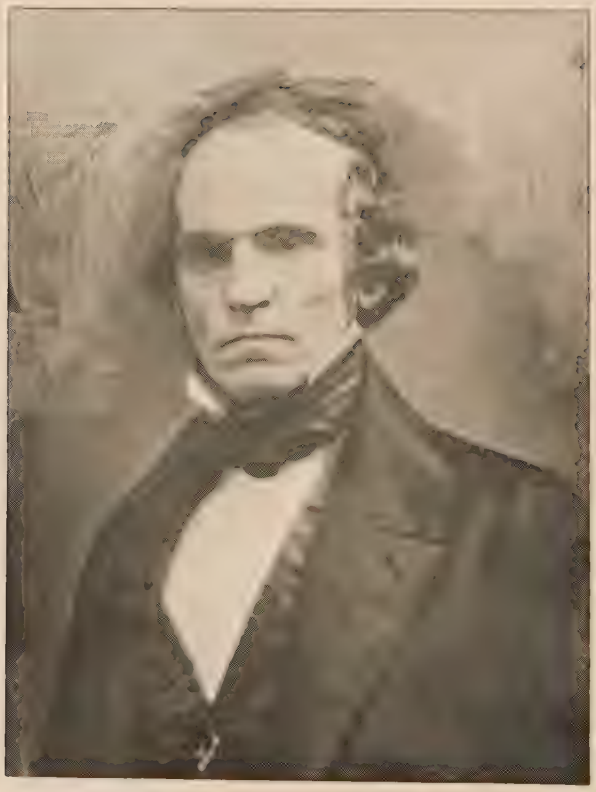
On June 7, 1834, Benjamin F. Hancock, Esq., related his Christian experience and was baptised on the Sabbath following. Mr. Hancock had before this time been active in the financial and business affairs of the church and soon became a leader in its spiritual interests. He was one of the church's first trustees, acting as secretary of the Board, and, what would seem strange enough now, he was Sunday school superintendent for two years before his conversion. A Sunday school had been organized a few months prior to the constitution of the church.

The sessions of the school were held at first in the house of Mrs. Grosscup, and later in the school building, situated at the corner of Cherry and Airy Streets, until the basement of the church was ready for occupancy, in September, 1833. Mr. Hancock being a reputable and highly respected citizen, and much interested in Christian work and in sympathy with the efforts of the Baptists to establish a church in the community, was chosen its first Sunday school superintendent.

Benjamin F. Hancock, Esq., was born in 1799 and died in 1867. He was a successful lawyer at the Montgomery County bar for many years and greatly

respected throughout the county for his ability and rare integrity. Besides being Sunday school superintendent and trustee in the Baptist church, he was for a number of years an honored deacon. He was a man of deep convictions and of marked individuality. In his government of the Sunday school he was rigid and methodical. He loved his church and labored with untiring devotion for what he believed to be the highest interests of the cause of Christ. His more illustrious son, General W. S. Hancock, the hero of Gettysburg and the Democratic candidate for President in 1880, was, in his childhood, a scholar in the Baptist Sunday school, where his father had been so many years a faithful superintendent.

At the meeting in June, 1834, a very important resolution was passed, "that special prayer be made to the great Head of the church, that He would send us a pastor, whose labors He would own and bless in the conversion of many sinners and the upbuilding of this church in all the graces of His Holy Spirit." Not a few of the precedents of church business meeting are more honored in the breach than in the observance, but here is one that ought to be assiduously observed and invariably followed whenever a pastor is to be chosen.



H. O. WYER

Pastor from July, 1834, to October, 1834.

CHAPTER III.

Pastorate of Rev. Henry Otis Wyer to that of Rev. C. E. Wilson —July, 1834, to January, 1835.

Rev. H. O. Wyer visited the church in July, 1834, and on the thirteenth of that month was unanimously called to the pastorate.

Mr. Wyer, like his predecessor, was a young man, being only thirty-three, but like him, also, already a preacher of marked power and ability. He was educated at the Waterville College and Columbian University. At the age of twenty-two he became pastor of an important church in Savannah, Ga., where hundreds were converted under his ministry, and the Baptist cause in that city was greatly advanced. As a preacher he is said to have had few equals, being especially fitted for the pulpit by his good voice, comprehensive mind, cultivated intellect and sanctified heart. Among his converts, whom he baptized in the South, was Richard Fuller, D. D., who became one of the most noted men in the denomination. Dr. Fuller was educated at Harvard, and, entering upon his chosen profession of the law, soon became one of the most accomplished lawyers in his state. He was for a number of years a member of the Episcopal

church, but, during a great revival of religion, he became convinced that he had never been converted, and so professed conversion at this time. He had been immersed by the Episcopal rector when he united with that church, but, dating his real conversion from the influence of this revival season, and thoroughly convinced that believer's baptism only was scriptural, he was re-baptized by Mr. Wyer. Dr. Richard Fuller achieved a national reputation by his memorable debate with President Francis Wayland on the slavery question.

The baptism of this remarkable man, which was an event of such importance that it became known throughout the country, was among the last pastoral duties of Mr. Wyer before coming to Norristown.

During this pastorate, September 13, 1834, a committee was appointed for the purpose of examining candidates for baptism, and also to attend to all cases of disorder in all members of the church. This committee consisted of the pastor, Phinehas Phillips, Thos. Shaw, George Eve and Benjamin F. Hancock.

Prior to this, candidates for baptism and all cases of discipline came directly, and at once, before the church. Now these matters were to be considered first by a committee and then brought before the church for final action. At a previous meeting a committee had been appointed to examine persons professing to be called to preach the Gospel, and on September 13, 1834, John Courtney, having been recommended by said committee, was granted a license to preach.

Mr. Wyer's pastorate came to a close in October, 1834, after only three months' duration. He was broken in health when he came from Savannah, and he did not recover sufficiently to do the work, even of the small church in Norristown.

During this brief pastorate there were several conversions, and a few were added to the church.

C. E. WILSON

Pastor from January, 1835, to April, 1838.

CHAPTER IV.

Pastorate of Rev. Charles E. Wilson to that of Rev. David Bernard—January, 1835, to June, 1838.

The church now being pastorless, a committee, consisting of three brethren, Phinehas Phillips, B. F. Hancock and S. D. Phillips, was appointed to obtain supplies for the pulpit. At a meeting in December, 1834, two unsuccessful attempts having been made to secure a pastor, it was voted that "a day be set apart for humiliation and prayer, believing that our condition at present particularly called upon us to seek divine aid."

On Thursday, January 1, 1835, the following persons were elected as trustees for the year, viz: Phinehas Phillips, S. D. Phillips, George Eve, Thomas Shaw, George W. Thomas, B. F. Hancock and John Branch.

On the tenth of January, Rev. Charles E. Wilson was called to take charge of the church for three months. Mr. Wilson had been engaged in missionary work in the West. He was also very successful in evangelistic meetings. He was at one time president of the New Jersey State Convention. The following appeared in the obituary notice of that convention in

1870: "The purity of Bro. Wilson's character, the simplicity of his life and his earnest piety deeply impressed those thrown into his companionship. His out-spoken loyalty to his country illustrated his unselfish integrity. Extremely diffident, our brother shunned notoriety and place; nevertheless, sought out, he was trusted and beloved as a wise man, a good man and a man faithful in all things."

In the reminiscence of Mr. Wilson's Norristown pastorate by his widow, Mrs. Theresa Wilson, she says: "One of the most prominent events in the life of Mr. Wilson was the stand he took on the slavery question. Dr. Wm. T. Brantley delivered a lecture on slavery. Mr. Wilson heard it and replied through the papers. It was like the explosion of a bomb-shell in the community. Intense excitement prevailed. It was the beginning of a long controversy. There were not many ready then to stand by their pastor, but before the discussion closed they were almost united on the subject. Mr. Samuel Aaron dated his first convictions on the anti-slavery question from this controversy. Mr. Wilson was no respecter of persons, when great principles were at issue, but with quiet intrepidity took his stand for the truth."

In 1882, Rev. Levi S. Beck wrote of his friend as follows: "My acquaintance with Mr. Wilson began at the time he became pastor at Norristown, forty-seven years ago. I was then pastor at Milestown. Both churches belonged then to the Central Union Association, and this connection frequently brought us together. About this time protracted meetings began

to be held among the churches of our denomination, and those of the Central Union Association were especially active in holding such meetings. Many in the old Philadelphia Association looked upon these movements with suspicion, and were disposed to regard the Central Union brethren as unsound in the faith, because of their adoption of such 'new measures' to promote the cause of Christ. Bro. Wilson entered heart and soul upon this revival work. I remember laboring with him in three meetings of this kind—at Milestown, Reading and Norristown. Mr. Wilson was a singularly modest man, never obtruding himself upon his brethren, and yet fearless and faithful in the presentation of truth and in the maintenance of what he believed to be right. I have a distinct recollection of his controversy with Dr. Brantley on the subject of slavery. The very fact of a controversy at that time and on that subject, with an intellectual giant like Dr. Brantley, proclaims how unflinchingly and faithfully Mr. Wilson adhered to his convictions. The Lord be praised for such men! There is no one among my earlier acquaintances in the ministry whose memory I cherish more tenderly than that of Bro. Wilson. His deep piety, his consecration to his work and his loving spirit won not only my warmest regard but gave him a place in the confidence of all with whom he came in contact."

During this pastorate, the question of admitting colored brethren to the church came up and was discussed at several meetings. August 8, 1835, it was resolved that the colored brethren take their seats

at communion with the other members. At this same meeting a letter was received from Hatboro, requesting the church to send delegates to assist them in constituting a church at that place. The pastor, Mr. Wilson and B. F. Hancock were chosen.

September 12, it was unanimously decided that Mr. Wilson, who had now been serving the church as acting pastor for eight months, be continued as regular pastor without limitation.

At this meeting it was voted to elect two more deacons, whereupon Thomas Shaw and George Eve were set apart to that office.

January 7, 1836, the following brethren were elected trustees for the ensuing year: Thomas Shaw, Phinehas Phillips, S. D. Phillips, George W. Thomas, George Eve, William White and B. F. Hancock.

At the regular business meeting, held January 9, 1836, B. F. Hancock offered a series of resolutions, which were adopted at the February meeting, making it obligatory upon every member to pay at least one and one-half cents weekly for the maintenance of the Sabbath school and the church, and that a committee of ten should be appointed, whose duty it would be to collect these weekly fees.

This was the first effort of the church to devise a Scriptural plan for systematic and proportionate giving. It aimed to secure a regular weekly offering from every member of the church and congregation. It would tend to make the matter of giving to the Lord's work not only an honorable business-like proceeding, but also an important religious duty. It

would make the offering of the people a sacred and essential part of worship. This Gospel plan of finances introduced into the church at that early date, was one of the most important measures they had thus far enacted. The plan shows the business-like head and consecrated heart of its author. What a blessing such a talented consecrated Christian lawyer as Mr. Hancock would be to every church and commuuity.

At this time the church took an advanced and progressive step on the temperance question. On the tenth of September, 1836, after some discussion, the following resolutions were passed: "Whereas, the church is fully convinced, from observation and experience, that the use of intoxicating liquors as a beverage is neither needful or useful, and that its continuance tends to the formation of intemperance appetites and habits; and whereas, the general spirit of the Bible unequivocally interdicts the indulgence of any irregular propensities, and we are solemnly commended therein to 'give none occasion of stumbling to any brother,' 'to give non-offence to the Church of God,' 'to love our neighbor as ourselves,' and 'to abstain from all appearance of evil,' and 'if meat maketh my brother to offend I will eat no flesh while the world stands.' He further says, 'when we sin so against the brethren we sin against Christ.' Wherefore, resolved, that this church verily believes, that manufacturing, vending or using intoxicating liquor for a beverage is a manifest violation of the spirit of the Bible, and is morally wrong and should be abandoned by every person, and especially by every

professor of religion. That, hereafter, no person shall be admitted a member of the church who is not a member of some temperance society, constituted on the broad plan of total abstinence from the use of all intoxicating liquors as a beverage, or who does not fully recognize the principle of abstainers as aforesaid, to be obligatory upon him or her."

The spirit and sentiment of these resolutions have been marked in all the subsequent history of the church. From this noble and aggressive stand on this question, the church has never departed. The principles enunciated by these resolutions have been more or less fervently proclaimed and strongly emphasized by nearly all succeeding pastors. They have been a marked feature in the life and teachings of the ablest minister in the pulpit and the most prominent workers in the church and Sunday school, from that day to this.

The church has always been recognized as a strong factor in the promulgation of temperance sentiment in the community. Its determined and uncompromising stand against the saloon, the liquor traffic and the whole license system, has more than once brought upon ministers and laymen the calumny and persecution of the opponents of virtue and sobriety.

Total abstinence from the use of all intoxicating liquors as a beverage is still one of the required conditions for church membership.

On May 31, 1836, the Central Union Association met for the first time with the Norristown Church. Dr. Brantley was moderator. Vigorous resolutions

were adopted, declaring against intemperance; also the following on Sabbath schools: "That this association regard with deepest interest the establishment and success of Sabbath schools, and recommend that the church not only have a Sabbath school in its place of worship, but to organize branch schools in every destitute place wherever practicable."

It was customary at this time for the church to set apart a day, occasionally, for special prayer, to supplicate the bestowment of divine grace. Accordingly, on October 8, 1836, it was resolved "that, as the state of the church calls for humiliation and sorrow, it is earnestly recommended that it should embrace an early opportunity of holding a special prayer meeting, to deplore before God the low state of religion and to supplicate the bestowment of his spirit and grace."

About this time, the denomination had undertaken to raise $5,000 to purchase tracts and bibles for the "Great Western Valley." The Norristown Church appointed a committee to solicit subscriptions for this work, and a collection was taken annually for the same. Thirty dollars was raised, also, by the church to constitute the pastor, Mr. Wilson, a life member of the American and Foreign Bible Society. Collections were taken regularly for the aid of Foreign Missions.

April 11, 1837, Pastor Wilson's salary was raised to $400.

The first choir of the church was organized at this time. Abram Anderson, Geo. Wright and E. G. McCarter were chosen a committee to select a choir of singers from the church and congregation.

It was the custom of the church to resolve, formally, from time to time, to hold protracted meetings. At such time the pastor would invite a number of neighboring ministers to assist him in preaching. These meetings were usually held in winter, but that the church depended more upon the indications of Providence and the direction of the Holy Spirit, than upon the season, is evident from the following: At a business meeting on August 12, 1837, it was resolved to hold a "meeting of days," commencing on Friday, the fifteenth of September; that Pastor Wilson be authorized to request the attendance of ministering brethren, and that subscription papers be circulated to defray the expenses of the protracted meeting.

The last important work of Mr. Wilson as pastor was the introduction of a series of resolutions, making the Sunday school an organic part of the church and under the supervision of the same. Before this time, the school had been sustained by a society organized for that purpose.

On Lord's Day morning, November 26, 1837, Mr. Wilson resigned the pastoral charge of the church and stated his determination to leave Norristown about the first of April, 1838.

This pastorate of three years and three months was a very successful one, during which many important measures were introduced, and eighty were added to the church.

A society having been organized by the denomination for the printing and distribution of bibles over the world, the Norristown church, on February 10,

1838, voted as follows: "That we heartily approve of the formation of the American and Foreign Bible Society, and do hereby tender it out best wishes and our aid; that in our opinion, the society, in its operation, should be confined to no place, but should be at liberty to dispense the Word of God wherever needed; that the clerk transmit to the corresponding secretary of the American and Foreign Bible Society a copy of the foregoing resolutions."

In their letter to the Association, they state that an active sympathy is felt by this church in the great designs of evangelistic enterprise, but especially in the cause of Sabbath schools, missions and temperance. The next month a society was formed in the church, auxiliary to the Baptist State Convention, for missionary purposes. Phinehas Phillips was appointed the agent.

DAVID BERNARD

Pastor from June, 1838, to April, 1841.

CHAPTER V.

Pastorate of Rev. David Bernard to that of Rev. Samuel Aaron—June, 1838, to April, 1841.

It was on March 20, 1838, one month after the departure of Mr. Wilson, that the church voted unanimously to call as pastor Rev. David Bernard, of Bedford, New York. He was to have a salary of $800; also house rent, fuel for one fire and $60 to defray expenses of moving. Mr. Bernard accepted the call and entered upon the duties of his office June 9, 1838.

The Rev. David Bernard was born in Utica, New York, in 1798. He was educated at Columbian University, Washington, D C., and read law with the Hon. Felix Grundy, of Nashville, Tenn. After his conversion he abandoned the study of law and decided to enter the ministry. He was ordained at Stillwater, New York, in 1824. In 1869, Mr. Bernard wrote as follows concerning the choosing of his life work: "When a young man, four paths lay open before me, all inviting my acceptance. One led to wealth, one to fame, one to pleasure and one to usefulness. By grace I ignored the first three and chose the fourth. I have gone through this path for seventy years. I

look back and around me. I look forward. I have gathered no coffers of wealth, no chaplets of flowers, no cups of nectar. I am poor, but my wealth is in the bank that never fails. My crown is laid up in heaven ; it is a crown of life."

When Mr. Bernard came to the Norristown church he was, as each of his predecessors had been, a preacher of some prominence in the denomination. Although he had been preaching but fourteen years, and was still a young man, he was widely known. That which brought him into prominence during his early life was his attitude to secret organizations. At this time the feeling was very strong throughout the country, particularly in New York, against free masonry. It was in 1826 that William Morgan wrote his famous book exposing the secrets of this fraternity. The mysterious abduction of Morgan occurred in the same year. The Baptist churches in many sections of the country felt it their duty to take action upon the matter. It became an article of faith, with those so convinced, that no person could be a good citizen, or a good Christian, and at the same time be a mason. The more the excitement grew the stronger became this conviction. Meetings were repeatedly held, and associations passed their resolutions of condemnation and disfellowship, alleging the institution to be injurious in its tendency, barbarous in its oaths, unwarranted in its claims to antiquity, and impious in its pretensions and ceremonials. The following was a common form of resolution in many Baptist associations and conferences :

"*Resolved*, that in the opinion of this Conference, it is the duty of every member of our churches who is a Free Mason to dissolve all connection with the Masonic fraternity, and hold himself no longer bound by any ties of allegiance to the Masonic institution; and that he give to the church to which he belongs satisfactory evidence of the same, thereby practically disapproving the institution."

Dr. Alexander M. Beebee says that probably nine-tenths of Baptist Masons dissolved their connection with the order. Those who did not, for the most part, had their connection with Baptist churches dissolved.

It was impossible that a wide-awake, aggressive young man like David Bernard, who had just been ordained to the ministry and was living in the section where the battle was hottest, should not take a decisive stand upon a question that was agitating the political and religious world. He spoke and wrote strongly and fearlessly against the abduction of Morgan, and openly denounced the institutions of masonry. His son, Charles B. Bernard, Esq., said his father was a marked man after he renounced masonry, yet he was fearless enough to travel alone in all sections of the country.

In 1829, Mr. Bernard wrote a book entitled "Light on Masonry," of which President John Quincy Adams once said, in a public address: "Elder David Bernard was a minister of the Genesee Baptist Association, in New York. He was a man of good repute and of blameless life. To him, perhaps, more than to any other man, the world is indebted for the revelation of the most execrable mysteries of masonry, nor could he, as a minister of the word of God, have performed

a service to his country and fellow-Christians more suitable to his sacred functions."

What gave Mr. Bernard's book a special interest at that time, was the fact that he had himself been for several years a prominent mason, having taken the four chaptoral degrees, the seven ineffable degrees and the "higher degrees." His secession from the order was therefore the more significant.

Mr. Bernard was also a very strongly pronounced anti-slavery man, and it was during his pastorate that the Norristown church took those first decisive steps that made them the strong fervid abolitionists that they afterwards became, and by which they were distinguished until slavery was finally abolished.

The work for which Pastor Bernard will always be remembered by Bible students is his translation of the Scriptures. This work, which is a new version of the entire Bible, bears the impress of the translator's profound and accurate scholarship. He was engaged upon this task during his stay in Norristown, but it was not until 1842, the year after leaving the church, that the work was given to the public, from Lippincott's publishing house.

Mr. Bernard's preaching is said to have been exegetical and expository. He occasionally wrote his sermons, but rarely used his manuscript in the pulpit. He preached for thirty years, and was for fifteen years agent for Bible societies. He died in Troy, New York, July 11, 1876.

In the year 1839, the trustees sold for the church the first piece of land from the original tract. This

policy of selling lots from the church property to pay off current debts was unfortunately continued, until only the immediate site of the building was left. While this course seemed necessary then, and was probably not inexpedient when the lot embraced nearly a whole square, it was an egregious mistake to continue it so as to hinder or greatly embarrass the future enlarging or remodelling of the church building.

Considerable attention was given to instruction in sacred music at this time. Singing schools were held in the church regularly, on Saturday evenings, for three months at a time. At this early date an impetus was given to congregational singing, for which the church has long been noted.

A little later a gallery was erected for the choir in the rear of the auditorium, in accordance with the old-fashioned and ridiculous way of having the organ and the singers behind the audience.

October 12, 1839, the Montgomery County Anti-Slavery Society, through Phinehas Phillips, asked for the use of the church for the society's quarterly meetings. Although the house, at this time, was not granted, the fact that the society asked for it, and that the request was formally considered, shows plainly that the church was regarded as being to a greater or less extent in sympathy with the anti-slavery movement, even at this time.

It was while Mr. Bernard was still living in Norristown that an anti-slavery meeting was held in the Baptist church, when addresses were delivered by

Hons. Garret Smith and Frederick Douglass. As the people were leaving the church stones were hurled through the windows, and so Mr. Bernard remained in the church through the night, lest the building might be destroyed.

Sabbath desecration was now becoming a serious matter, and the church adopted the following: "*Resolved*, That we believe it to be the duty of Christians to abstain from all labor on the Lord's Day, except what is absolutely a work of necessity or mercy, and to keep the day as a day of woship to the Lord."

The Central Union Association at this time also declares, "whereas the Sabbath is constantly violated by traveling and pleasure riding on that holy day; therefore, resolved, that this association urge upon all churches and the public generally to discountenance such practices altogether, as *morally wrong*, except in cases of mercy and necessity."

On December 12, 1840, Mr. Bernard gave notice that he would vacate the pastoral office on the ninth of April following, and requested the church to look out a suitable person to fill the place. Accordingly a committee was appointed, consisting of the pastor and brethren Hancock, Thomas, Scattergood, March, Shaw and S. D. Phillips. One could hardly conceive of a more commendable course than this, in the delicate and important matter of choosing a pastor. If this course were always pursued, and every retiring pastor, before he leaves his field, with the aid of the wisest members of the church, would endeavor to

select and place his successor, the dreadful evils resulting from long interims of pastorates and the abominable practice of "candidating" would be largely avoided. The retiring pastor, who has the highest interests of the church at heart, and who is likely to be better and more widely acquainted with ministers than the laymen, ought to be the most competent to select a suitable man as his successor.

During the pastorate of Mr. Bernard, as was the custom at this period, protracted meetings were held at different times. Nearly one hundred were added to the church by baptism, during his ministry.

During these first eight years of its history the church had made rapid progress and was now quite a strong and vigorous body. There were two hundred and ninety-one members, among them were some of the most influential men of the county. Excepting the First Church of Philadelphia, the Norristown Church was much the largest one in the Central Union Association. There was a good number of accessions every year, the largest number any single year being sixty, in 1834, fifty-five by baptism and five by letter, and the smallest number being twelve, in 1836; so that, although the discipline was rigid and there were frequent exclusions, the membership was steadily increasing. The Sunday-school, of which Mr. Hancock had been superintendent from its beginning, now numbered one hundred and forty scholars, with twenty teachers.

Norristown was building up quite rapidly at this time, and during these years the Baptist church kept

apace with the town. As many as fifteen persons were sometimes received by letter in a year.

The church had already identified itself with all the missionary and benevolent organizations of the denomination. It had taken a determined and advanced stand in the matter of temperance reform and was soon to be equally pronounced and progressive on the slavery question. Indeed the church had already come to be looked upon as a true representative of virtue and sobriety in the community. Its influence in the diffusion of the principles of a pure Christianity was second to that of no other organization.

SAMUEL AARON

Pastor from April, 1841, to June, 1844.

CHAPTER VI.

Pastorate of Rev. Samuel Aaron to that of Rev. I. N. Hobart—April, 1841, to June, 1844.

The young church was now about to make a move which would prove to be one of the most momentary events in its history, and by which it would render its greatest service to Norristown and confer an everlasting benediction upon the entire community. This event was the calling to the pastorate of the church the Rev. Samuel Aaron.

At a special church meeting, December 31, 1840, Pastor Bernard, chairman of the committee appointed to obtain a pastor, reported that the committee were prepared to recommend Rev. Samuel Aaron, of Burlington, N. J., as a suitable person for pastor. After a free interchange of views among the members, it was unanimously agreed to invite Mr. Aaron to take the pastoral charge of the church. At the January meeting, a letter was read from Mr. Aaron, informing the church of his acceptance of the call to the pastoral office. Thus, Mr. Bernard, at the close of a faithful and successful ministry, rendered his greatest services to the church by securing, as his successor in the pastoral office, this noble man of God. He was instrumental, under God, in bringing to Norristown one who no doubt did more than any other man has

ever done to mould the life and character of its people, in accordance with a high and divine pattern.

Early in April, 1841, Mr. Aaron, accompanied by his wife and his daughter Martha, came to Norristown and assumed, at once, the duties of his new charge as pastor of the church, at the same time conducting a school, at first in the mansion-house of Hon. Burd Wilson, and later in the Norristown Academy.

The moulding influence of Mr. Aaron's mind and heart was soon manifest along all lines of Christian activity in the church, and of moral reform in the community. In the Central Union Association he was, from the first, a recognized leader in all the deliberations of the body. At its session, held with the Norristown Church, the spring that Mr. Aaron became pastor there, he was made moderator, and his hand is known to have shaped the resolution on slavery, that elicited an animated and prolonged discussion, which was long remembered as the chief event of the session. The preamble and resolutions read as follows: "Whereas, a large portion of the Baptists of the United States of America do directly or indirectly sanction the system of American slavery; and, whereas, this system aims, both by law and usage, to make an enslaved brother man as nearly as possible a valuable article of property, inflicting the severest punishment on anyone unwilling to become such, thus perpetrating a shocking outrage on what every man feels to be his natural rights, and preventing a human being from knowing and honouring God according to the dictates of conscience and the terms

of the Gospel ; and, whereas, the Great Head of the Church has affirmed his followers to be the light of the world, and ordained them his witnesses 'till the end of time: therefore, resolved, That we do hereby, in obedience to our Lord and Saviour, being accountable to him alone for our motives and conduct, bear our solemn testimony against American slavery as a sin ; and that we warn and implore all Baptists to clear themselves, by open confession and repentance in the sight of God and men, of all participation in this great national crime."

The resolution was first laid on the table, and afterwards called up and settled by thirty-one votes in the affirmative and twelve in the negative. Other important measures enacted at this meeting were the following : "That we regard the organization of the American Baptist Publication Society as an era in the history of our denomination that calls for devout thankfulness to God, and that we recommend it to the enlarged liberality and fervent prayers of all our churches ; that we recommend to the churches the 'Baptist Record,' published in Philadelphia, and the 'Christian Reflector,' published in Worcester, Mass., as worthy of patronage."

The Norristown letter to the association spoke of "the Sabbath school as a favorite and famed nursery of the church, to which a number of the worthiest members had devoted themselves with fervid and long enduring zeal and charity." It declared that "the church is in principle opposed to the use of intoxicating drinks, and would surely discipline a dram

drinking or dram selling member, and commend the same rule to their brethern. They believe that the saints are not their own, but bought with a price, and that their personal service and their substance should be unreservedly devoted to the real cause of God, so as to give a translated Bible and the Gospel, through a pious ministry, to every human soul, as well as consolation and aid to saints in affliction, poverty and bondage."

Although Pastor Aaron's time was so largely occupied with his school and with many public affairs, he still gave much attention to the spiritual and financial interests of his church. Upon his recommendation six persons were chosen, whose duty it should be, in conjunction with the pastor and deacons, to attend to cases of discipline, seek out delinquent members, and endeavor to promote the spirituality of the church.

October 8, 1842, the church proceeded to elect four additional deacons. The election resulted in the choice of Thomas Scattergood, B. F. Hancock, Wm. White, and John McCrea. The church followed the apostolic order, in the setting apart of these deacons formally by the laying on of hands and prayer. Brethren from other churches were invited to assist in the ordination services, which consisted of a sermon, prayer and charge to the newly elected officials.

There had been, all along, some difficulty in raising sufficient money to defray the necessary expenses of the church ; so, on March 12, 1842, a resolution was passed, declaring "it to be the indispensable duty of every member of the church to contribute something

toward defraying the expenses of keeping up divine worship in our meeting house and the expenses incident thereto." And the ensuing August, the trustees enacted the following: "The president shall appoint a suitable person collector, whose duty it shall be to collect the pew rents, and such other money as shall be required of him by the board of trustees, or the church, and from time to time, as collector, pay the same over to the treasurer and take his receipt therefor, and whenever required by the board of trustees, or the pew committee, he shall exhibit to them his books for settlement or otherwise." It was also voted "that the collector shall be entitled to receive five per cent. of all moneys by him collected and paid over to the treasurer." These business like methods of managing that very delicate and difficult matter of church finance reflect great credit upon those who enacted them.

Owing to Pastor Aaron's numerous and exacting duties outside the church, in connection with his academy, it was resolved, finally, to invite Rev. I. N. Hobart, who had been recently ordained to the ministry, to become assistant pastor, and that he be paid two hundred and fifty dollars per annum. Rev. Emerson Andrews, an evangelist, also rendered valuable assistance during a protracted meeting.

In the meantime, Mr. Aaron's popularity and success as a teacher became so great that in 1844 he undertook the building and founding of Treemount Seminary. This great work required his attention so constantly that in June he asked the church to release

him from the pastoral office, which they reluctantly consented to do.

During this pastorate of three years, eighty-seven were added to the church by baptism and forty-three by letter.

The spiritual interests, in the midst of many trying circumstances, seem to have been fairly well sustained, yet there were times of lamentable declension, as is evident from the following letter to the association in May, 1844: "This church speaks of their religious state as being languid and unfruitful. They say that many of the converts of past days seem, to a fearful extent, wedded to the world. A few humble brethren and sisters are regular in their attendance at the prayer meeting, but those assembling seem to languish under the blighted faith and chilled affections of the mass. The congregations on the Sabbath, however, are large, and the outward attention to the Word all that could be desired."

Mr. Aaron remained an active and influential member of the Norristown Church until he removed to Mount Holly, N. J., in 1859. Among the active members at this time were Phinehas Phillips, S. D. Phillips, Thomas Shaw, Thomas Scattergood, Joseph Abraham, Abner Supplee, Jacob Cauffman, B. F. Hancock, Eli G. McCarter, Charles Pugh, Geo. W. Thomas, John Dykes, Charles Slingluff and Isaac Eastburn.

At this time much attention was given to the discussion of questions of moral reform, in the sessions of the Central Union Association; so much so, that

matters pertaining to the spiritual interests were sometimes neglected. This fact led to the calling of a special session of the association, to meet with the Norristown Church, November 26 and 27, 1844, to adjust these matters. After prolonged and animated discussion, the following resolutions were adopted: "That no question of moral reform shall hereafter be discussed by this body more than one hour, during its session, and that no speaker shall occupy more than ten minutes;" "That no resolution shall be recorded as the sense of this association, on any moral subject, unless sustained by a vote of two-thirds of the members present;" "That a committee be appointed, at the commencement of each future session, so to arrange the devotional exercises as to occupy all the time not really needful for the business of the association;" "That this association hereafter act as a Domestic Missionary Society." This last resolution was the entering wedge that afterward separated a part of the association from the missionary union.

I. N. HOBART

Pastor from June, 1844, to July, 1846.

CHAPTER VII.

Pastorate of Rev. I. N. Hobart to that of Rev. Hiram Hutchins—June, 1844, to March, 1847.

On the twelfth of January, 1845, Rev. I. N. Hobart was unanimously elected pastor to succeed Mr. Aaron. Mr. Hobart had been acting pastor for a year prior to this.

In August of this year, the trustees were authorized to purchase a piece of ground for a cemetery and mortgage the church property for the payment of the same. They accordingly purchased of Rev. Samuel Aaron two acres of ground, on Sandy street, adjoining the borough line, for $600.00. At the suggestion of Mr. Aaron the graveyard was named Treemount Cemetery. It was then enclosed with a fence, planted with trees and made ready for use. It shows the high regard the church had for the Phillips family that the trustees were instructrd to select and present to Phinehas Phillips one of the best lots in the cemetery.

An important action, at this time, was the introduction by Mr. Hancock, and the adoption by the church, of a series of resolutions to make the church pews free, and to raise the necessary funds, for the support of the church, by voluntary contributions. The following was the estimate of the ordinary

expenses of the church for the year 1846: Pastor's salary, $500; fuel and lights, $70; sexton's salary, $60; Sabbath schools, $40; interest money, $90; contingencies, $40; total, $800. To the cause of missions, whether at home or abroad, and that of ministerial education, and to such other objects of Christian beneficence as were attracting attention, the church gave its sympathies and material support.

The first Lord's Day in each month was appropriated to missions, and a collection taken each evening for the work.

During this pastorate the slavery question was paramount in the minds of the people. Applications were made, from time to time, by the Anti-Slavery Society of Pennsylvania, for the use of the church for their regular meetings. These applications were duly considered, but, although there was a strong anti-slavery sentiment among a majority of the members, no formal vote favorable to granting the requests could yet be secured. Meetings in the interest of the abolition cause continued to be held, however, from time to time. The Baptist church alone, in Norristown, would open its house for the discussion of the slavery question. On this subject, as on that of temperance, the church was far in advance of the times. All the pastors, thus far, had been radical reformers and fearless advocates of the true principles of morality, liberty and sobriety. No one doubted where the Baptist church would stand upon the two great issues of anti-slavery and temperance. The large majority could be counted on to take the noble stand

demanded alike by morality and Christianity, and to maintain it in the face of bitter opposition and cruel insult. Public agitators of these issues occasionally took advantage of the church's known pronounced position and sometimes injured the cause they sought to advance by intemperate speech and rabid denunciation of those who differed from them in any way, as is shown by the following letter of Mr. Hobart: "At the time of my pastorate, 1844-46, public attention, in the free states, was largely drawn to the subject of slavery. There were, however, but two churches of our denomination in Eastern Pennsylvania that were out-spoken. These were Norristown and Radnor. In Norristown a large majority of the church favored opening the doors of the meeting house to anti-slavery speakers, and the minority yielded very gracefully. But those favoring it sometimes found their courtesy and kindness—and themselves—much abused. It is remembered that a certain lecturer asked the use of the house for an anti-slavery address, on a certain Sabbath afternoon. The request was granted. The lecturer came with whip and spurs. The church and ministry were the chosen point of attack. After censuring and rebuking, and finding almost all manner of faults with the church and ministry generally, all else were dropped and the Baptist church in Norristown, *in particular* was taken up. We were lashed and gored in front and rear, and on either side, in the most merciless manner, as though we were sinners above all men dwelling in Pennsylvania, or anywhere else, in Christendom or out of it. This done the speaker

had the unblushing impudence to ask the use of the house for further lectures. But, while the church and pastor, in respect to their anti-slavery sentiment and convictions, were far in advance of the church and ministry generally, they were not so destitute of true manliness and self-respect as to brook the insult, and decidedly refused the request."

At each annual session of the association, a heated discussion arose over the question of human bondage. The following was the usual form of resolution adopted: Resolved, that, in the opinion of this association, American slavery is a flagrant violation of the moral precepts of the Gospel of Christ, and, therefore, ought not to be tolerated in a Christian church, and that we earnestly entreat all Christians, and especially all Baptists, to have no participation in this sin, and to enter their solemn protest against it.

This pastorate was not marked by many conversions. Only two baptisms are reported. It seems to have been a time of pruning, rather than of reaping. At a single church meeting sixty members were disciplined, and twenty-two were excluded or dropped. The membership was reduced from three hundred and thirty-nine, in 1843, to two hundred and thirty-eight, in 1847, a loss of one hundred and one members in four years.

The letters to the association, in 1845 and 1846, sound disheartening notes of lamentation over the general spiritual declension. "No special outpouring of the Holy Spirit has been enjoyed. Have nothing to deplore but a want of likeness to our vital Head,

and lack of engagedness in His services. It would afford us pleasure if in this, our annual epistle, we could mention the revival of God's work among us. This we cannot do. We trust there are some among us who pray for the peace of Jerusalem ; for the prosperity of Zion. Still we have occasion to humble ourselves before God, and deplore, with the deepest self-abasement, our want of love to him, and our want of zeal in his cause."

This was a season of unusual barrenness, throughout the churches. The Norristown Church reported only two baptisms during the four years of '44, '45, '46 and '47. In 1846, seventeen churches of the Central Union Association reported but sixty-two baptisms, the smallest number in the history of the association. In 1843 they had reported four hundred and forty-five baptisms.

On Sunday morning, June 28, 1846, Mr. Hobart read his resignation as pastor, but, at the request of the church, he continued as supply until his successor was chosen.

Rev. I. N. Hobart, D.D., was born in Lynn, N. H., February 20, 1812. He was converted in 1831, and baptized the same year. He was ordained to the Gospel ministry August 12, 1841, at Radnor, Pa., and was pastor of the Radnor Baptist Church from this date to October, 1844, when he resigned to accept the call to Norristown, as the successor of Rev. Samuel Aaron. Owing to impaired health, he resigned this charge in 1846, and soon after returned to New England, and for about two years remained without

pastoral charge. He labored in several fields in New England and New York, until 1868, when he was appointed, by the Home Mission Society, to take charge of its work in Illinois. Subsequently he became district secretary for the States of Illinois, Iowa and Wisconsin. Dr. Hobart was a man of marked self-devotion and administrative ability. He was a valued and intimate friend of Mr. Aaron, through whose influence he came to Norristown, first as assistant and afterwards as full pastor. Doctor Hobart was much attached, also, to the Norristown Church. In writing of his labors there, forty years afterward, he speaks of B. F. Hancock, Phinehas and S. D. Phillips, Thomas Scattergood, Joseph Abraham, Abner Supplee, Thomas Shaw, George W. Thomas, George Eve, William White, John McCrea, Samuel Morton, J. D. McVaugh and Alfred Scattergood as "a goodly company of excellent men."

Dr. Hobart, like his immediate predecessor, was a radical reformer, and took a firm stand on the great issues of temperance, anti-slavery and "Free Missions."

HIRAM HUTCHINS

Pastor from March, 1847, to January, 1850.

CHAPTER VIII.

Pastorate of Rev. Hiram Hutchins to that of Rev. W. E. Cornwell—March, 1847, to November, 1850.

The committee appointed to look out a suitable person for pastor, after diligent and faithful search, recommended Rev. Hiram Hutchins, of Richfield, N. Y., who visited the church and preached with much acceptance, and on the twelfth of November, 1846, was unanimously elected to the pastorate. He proved to be one of the most popular and successful pastors in the history of the church. He was in perfect accord with the views of Mr. Aaron and those of the church, in relation to evangelistic work and all questions of moral reform. Mr. Hutchins assumed his charge in March, 1847, and became at once an indefatigable and persevering laborer.

The old question of renting the house of worship for the annual meetings of the Eastern Anti-slavery Society came up again, and on the twelfth of June, after a long discussion, it was finally voted to grant the request of the society, upon their payment of one hundred and twenty-five dollars rental, and on the condition that the church reserve the right to rescind the grant at any time after the first meeting.

The society's anniversaries were held here for three years. These meetings were largely attended, and were the occasion of many stirring and exciting scenes. Such celebrated abolitionists as Wendell Philips, Wm. Lloyd Garrison and Frederick Douglass were among the speakers who came from a distance. These noted and eloquent anti-slavery leaders confirmed and greatly strengthened the already strong anti-slavery sentiment in the community. They served, at the same time, to incite the violent opposition of the pro-slavery portion of the community, who threatened to burn the house down, if such men as Phillips, Garrison and Douglass were allowed to speak there; but the church, nothing daunted by these threats of violence, continued to throw wide open its doors, and to stand firm for the truth, loyal to God and humanity.

Norristown was one of the stations on the line of the underground railroad. Prominent among the agents in charge of this route were Rev. Samuel Aaron, Pastor Hutchins and other members of the Baptist church. The number of fugitives who passed through Norristown, assisted by their friends, increased from year to year, as many as twelve or fifteen being sometimes concealed within the town at one time. Owing to the bitter animosity against abolitionists, upon the part of a large number of the citizens, those who made active efforts in behalf of the fugitives had to incur general denunciation and social ostracism. Malignant threats were frequently made. These were not often carried into effect, however.

The nearest approach to a mob demonstration was the stoning of the Baptist church, during a session of one of the anniversaries of the Anti-slavery Society, which was held there. The meeting was broken up and the most intense excitement followed.

This church was the only building in the town in which these meetings could be held, while the anti-slavery agitation was at its height. Among the interesting incidents in the anti-slavery movement, in which the Baptist church participated, was that of Henry Brown, or Henry (Box) Brown, as he was called. He was a slave in Richmond, who conceived the plan of securing his freedom by having himself boxed up and sent to Philadelphia as merchandise. With the aid of his friends, the plan was successfully carried out. The box reached Philadelphia at twelve o'clock at night, when those who had been appointed to receive it were in waiting. Brown had kept himself alive by means of water which he had in a sack, some crackers, and a gimlet with which he could let in more air as needed. Theo. Bean says that, after his arrival in Philadelphia, he was taken to Norristown, where an anti-slavery meeting was being held in the Baptist church. Here Brown, with his box and all his outfit, was exhibited. Then he took the underground railroad to Canada.

Through all these thrilling and exciting incidents and scenes, Pastor Hutchins was a trusted and valued counselor and a fearless and efficient leader, not only among the Baptists, but among all the more aggressive advocates of social and moral reform in Norristown

and vicinity. He stood shoulder to shoulder with Mr. Aaron, who was the distinguished champion of emancipation in the county.

An outgrowth of the rapidly growing anti-slavery sentiment among Northern Baptists was the formation, in 1843, of the Free Mission Society. The more radical of the Baptist abolitionists had long opposed the policy of the Missionary Union, in receiving directly or indirectly, the avails of slavery to prosecute missionary work. The chief plank in their platform of principles was, "We solemnly pledge ourselves to God and one another to unite in the support of a Baptist Missionary Society, that shall be distinctly and thoroughly separated from all connection with the known avails of slavery, in the support of any of its benevolent purposes."

The Free Mission Society continued as a separate organization for nearly thirty years. It was instrumental in establishing foreign missions in Hayti, Japan, Burmah and Africa, and home missions in the West and South. They founded McGrawville College, in New York, and aided in establishing Leland University, at New Orleans. The society was served by many cultured and forcible speakers and writers. Most of its members were among the foremost promoters of temperance. They opposed secret societies and the use of the title "Reverend," among Christian ministers.

Mr. Hutchins was known to be in hearty accord with this movement. Indeed, this was one of the reasons why he was called to the pastorate of the

Norristown Church. So, in their letter to the Central Union Association, during the first year of his ministry, they write, "Believing that some of the principles on which the American Baptist Missionary Union is founded are repugnant to the principles of the Baptist denomination and to the Word of God, they withhold their contributions for missionary purposes, and give them to the world through the American Baptist Free Mission Society."

The Norristown Church had, before this, however, manifested its hostility to what they regarded as an unholy alliance and needless co-operation of the denomination's Foreign Missionary Society with slave holding interests in the South. Because of their withdrawal from the Missionary Union, many of the brethren of the denomination regarded the Norristown Church as schismatic and disloyal. The matter elicited frequent and warm discussion, at the sessions of the Central Union Association. Resolutions of commendation were offered in 1844 and 1845, both by the friends of the regular missionary societies of the denomination and by the adherents of the Free Mission Society and its organs. But, after protracted discussion, each of these resolutions was laid on the table. Owing to the rule requiring a two-thirds vote to pass any such measure, neither party could secure the necessary majority, consequently, neither the regularly constituted organization, nor the Free Mission Society, received the indorsement of the association. The association remained divided upon the question until 1872, when, the war having rendered needless the

existence of the Free Mission Society, it was voted to suspend its operations, except so far as was necessary to execute trusts and perpetuate legacies. At first only four churches, Norristown, Phœnixville, Radnor and East Nantmeal, withheld their contributions from the regular society and gave them to the Free Mission Society. A few more were added to these later. The Norristown Church continued to support the society as long as it existed. It is only fair to add that, after 1868, they contributed also to each of the other benevolent societies of the denomination.

In May, 1848, the Central Union Association held its sixteenth annual session in Norristown. B. F. Hancock was moderator, and the circular letter was prepared by Rev. Mr. Hutchins. It was a strong appeal to the churches on the subject of moral reform. The principal evils, which he denounced in emphatic terms, were covetousness, Sabbath breaking, rum selling, worldly conformity and slavery.

One of the signs of prosperity, during this ministry, was the erection, on Airy Street, of a parsonage, at a cost of sixteen hundred dollars. This was a much needed improvement. The sale of this property, some years later, was a great mistake, upon the part of the trustees.

An effort was also made, at this time, to put a baptistry in the church, and a committee was appointed to inquire into the propriety and expediency of the same. A resolution offered by Mr. Aaron was passed, adding one hundred dollars to the pastor's salary.

That considerable attention was paid to the matter of church attendance is shown from the fact that sixteen persons were disciplined at one time, for neglecting to attend the regular services.

Special efforts were made to promote the spiritual welfare of the church, and overcome the declension and depression of the preceding years. Evangelists and neighboring pastors were invited, at different times, to assist Pastor Hutchins, and the church enjoyed some precious seasons of revival. On March 11, 1849, twenty-five persons were baptized on a single Sunday; but only three others were baptized during the entire year. There were seventy-four additions to the church, during this pastorate: forty-six by baptism, and twenty-eight by letter.

The church sustained a heavy loss in the death of three prominent members, Dr. George W. Thomas, Deacon George Eve and Deacon Phinehas Phillips. Dr. Thomas was a good man and a great worker. Deacon George Eve was a valued member in the devotional meetings, being very spiritual, and gifted in prayer and exhortation. Phinehas Phillips was one of the founders of the church, a liberal giver, and a man of eminent piety. He was much devoted to the doctrine of the Second Coming of Christ. For many years he served upon every important committee, and filled, at different times, nearly every office in the church. The building of the first house of worship, and many subsequent improvements, were made possible largely by his munificence. His noble spirit and lofty Christian bearing won for him the esteem and confidence of

all his brethren. He lived a most exemplary Christian life, and came to the grave in a good old age, as a shock of corn in its season. In accordance with his own request, he was buried on his farm in Upper Merion.

The First Baptist Church of Norristown has been influential, not only in the way of moulding public sentiment, but has also been instrumental in establishing other churches. On the ninth of March, 1850, nine persons received letters of dismission for the purpose of forming a Baptist church at Bridgeport. Those dismissed for this purpose were Rev. William Smith, Sarah Ann Smith, Sylvester Makens, Susannah Makens, William B. Crow, Catharine Thomas, Mary Matilda Smith, Mary Carter and Mary Harris. The mother church showed a magnanimous spirit, toward this first offspring, by contributing three hundred dollars to the new enterprise this year.

After the departure of Mr. Hutchins from Norristown, Mr. Aaron supplied the pulpit for a time. It was fortunate indeed to have such a man to call on during the interim of pastorates. A teacher in Treemount Seminary, Rev. John Duer, also supplied occasionally. There was a good number of conversions, at this time, of persons who afterwards became very active in the church. Twenty-five were baptized on a single Sunday morning by Mr. Aaron.

SECOND CHURCH EDIFICE

The long contemplated improvements in the house of worship were now undertaken. S. D. Phillips and B. F. Hancock were appointed a committee to superintend the same. A well-known architect, Thomas U. Walter, of Philadelphia, was engaged to furnish suitable designs. These repairs and improvements were quite expensive, and included an entire new front, with a cupola about one hundred feet high. A baptistry was also built in the edifice, and the whole exterior and interior were improved in a very tasteful and proper manner. The expense of this was largely paid for by the bequest of Deacon Phinehas Phillips.

The church meeting of November 4, 1850, is memorable for the adoption of a set of resolutions, declaring in strong terms against the Fugitive Slave Law, just then enacted by Congress, as a part of Henry Clay's omnibus bill. The resolutions were proposed by Mr. Aaron and read as follows: "Resolved, That we as Christians and members of the Norristown Baptist Church do solemnly believe that the provisions of the bill lately enacted by Congress for the recovery of fugitive slaves are contradictory of the command of Jehovah, 'thou shalt not deliver unto his master the servant which escaped from his master unto thee.' Resolved, That, in commanding us to assist in re-enslaving the person who has escaped from slavery, it commands us to do to others as we would not that they should do to us, and thus positively contradicts the Lord Jesus Christ. Resolved, Therefore, that we will obey God rather than men, hide the outcast,

betray not him that wandereth, feed the hungry, clothe the naked fugitive and speed him on his way to freedom, and, for ourselves, cheerfully bear the penalties that human statutes may impose for the performance of the duties that we owe to God and to our neighbor."

These are strong, vigorous words, and showed the intense feeling and deep patriotic sentiment of the church at that time. Nor were they simply resolutions enacted and then unheeded and forgotten. The same brave men, who, by their voice and vote dared to say to the United States Congress, as the Apostles said to the Jewish Sanhedrin, "Whether it be right in the sight of God to hearken unto you more than unto God, judge ye," had the moral courage, also, to make their words effectual in actual deeds. Many a poor dusky fugitive, fleeing from an inhuman bondage, was given an asylum and hurried on to freedom by the members of this patriotic church.

Early in January, 1850, Mr. Hutchins resigned the pastorate to accept a call to Charlestown, Mass.

Excepting Mr. Aaron, with whom he was closely identified, Mr. Hutchins was probably the most vigorous and outspoken advocate of freedom in Norristown, during these years. His position, on the issues of the age, was deemed by many radical and extreme. But none doubted his sincerity and few could resist his logic. The pure doctrines of evangelical Christianity he held with a firm grasp. He taught that the Gospel, brought face to face with the public conscience, would prove itself to be that which

it professes—the great power of God in purifying the churches and the nation. Hence he had no sympathy with the doctrine of many modern reformers, that Christ's death was only a sublime example of self-sacrifice. He saw in it something higher, more inspiring, something deeper, something far better adapted to touch the heart and stir the soul. He loved the person of Christ and cordially admired His precepts and exhorted men to copy His example. But of all subjects, the one most dear to him, most constraining in its influence, was His atoning blood. A course of sermons which he preached on the necessity and nature of the atonement was considered by Mr. Aaron and the church as containing the key-note of all reform. In these discourses the opinion was expressed that the *first* want of the age was a return to the old, simple and sharply defined doctrines of the evangelical system, while the *second* was a bold, unflinching application of them to all transgressors of God's law. Their vitalizing power would then be known and felt by all. Slavery, intemperance, rationalism and infidelity would, in the face of such assaults, be paralyzed and wither away. The moral conquests that have been made, however small, have, from the time of the Apostles till now, been made by men who drank in deeply the spirit of evangelical truth. If men *not* of this class have been successful, they have been made so by the use of evangelical weapons. You look in vain for the victories of rationalists, evolutionists, scientists, over irreligion and all the forms of evil that have, and do

still, afflict our world. But there is an everlasting freshness and vitality in "the old, old story" of the Cross, and, rightly preached, it is still effectual in removing all wrong. Of course, a church, energized by such principles, is a progressive and aggressive body. The members are transformed gradually by the spirit of Christ, and, with such "a fire in their bones," they cannot be inactive, but must labor to bring souls to Christ, and they will be "zealous of good works."

Mr. Hutchins served but two churches, after leaving Norristown. From Charlestown he went to Brooklyn, and was pastor of the Bedford Avenue Church for thirty-one years. He was then made pastor emeritus until his death.

W. E. CORNWELL

Pastor from November, 1850, to June, 1852.

CHAPTER IX.

Pastorate of Rev. W. E. Cornwell to that of Rev. Roswell Cheney—November, 1850, to July, 1854.

On the first of December, 1850, Rev. William E. Cornwell, who had been preaching for the church for a month, was engaged as stated supply for a period of six months. Mr. Cornwell had been a minister in the German Reformed denomination for a number of years, and had lately accepted the Baptist view of the Bible doctrine and church ordinances. A council was called for his ordination as a Baptist minister, on December 25, 1850. Upon the convening of the council, Mr. Cornwell gave a satisfactory statement of his conversion and call to the ministry, also his view of Bible doctrine and his change of views concerning baptism and church government. After hearing him, the council unanimously agreed to ordain him as a regular minister of the Baptist denomination.

The way in which Mr. Cornwell became a Baptist is related by Rev. W. B. Tolan, as follows: "While Mr. Cornwell was pastor of the Reformed Church at Pleasantville, Pa., the Baptists were gathering in the people around them and, fearing lest they should lose some of their own members, they requested him to

preach on the subject of baptism and defend their side. He wisely told them not to agitate that matter, as it would do them no good, but they insisted upon it, and he finally told them that he must have time to give the subject a thorough examination, that he might speak intelligently on it and set forth the truth in its proper light. About this time he became acquainted with Brother Smith, pastor of the Baptist Church at Hatboro, and he loaned him Dr. Carson's work on baptism. By a thorough search of the Scriptures, Mr. Cornwell became convinced that he was wrong, that sprinkling had no place in the word of God, and that the Baptists were right. When he came before the church to preach on the subject, he said: 'you have demanded that I preach on the subject of baptism, and I am here to answer your request, but, after a prayerful and thorough search for the truth, I am obliged to take the Baptist side of the question.' When he made this announcement, one of the elders jumped up and said, 'My God, Mr. Cornwell, I hope not.' He replied 'it is so,' and he set forth the truth in its true light. Then he resigned and left them, and was baptized by Brother Smith, at Hatboro."

He continued as supply of the Norristown church until July 20, 1851, when he formally accepted the invitation, which had been extended him in March, to become regular pastor.

The second Tuesday in November, of this year, having been designated as a day of fasting, by the Central Union Association, it was so observed by the Norristown church.

On the fourteenth of December, 1851, Uriah Cauffman, having stated to the pastor his conviction of a call to preach the Gospel, it was unanimously voted to grant him a license. He then settled with the church at Mt. Pleasant, Ambler, Pa., where he was ordained.

On the fifth of January, 1852, Deacon Benjamin F. Hancock, who for some time had not been in sympathy with the majority of the members in their strong, anti-slavery views, expressed his desire to withdraw from the church. His request was granted, and, as is unusual among Baptist churches, he and his wife were given general letters of dismission to any Baptist church. His resignation of the superintendency of the Sunday school was also accepted at the same time. Mr. Hancock's withdrawal from the church was one of those unfortunate things which sometimes occur in the history of almost all churches, when a member, for personal, social, or political reasons, severs his connection with a church where he has been very useful. Mr. Hancock was now fifty-three years of age. He had been superintendent of the Sunday school from its organization. In the church he had been a valuable member. He had served faithfully and efficiently as trustee, deacon and church treasurer, for years. Many of the most important measures adopted were planned and proposed by him. He was loved by his pastors and respected and esteemed by all.

Mr. Hancock remained without church connection for a time, and then united with the Bridgeport

interest. Here he became a leader, the Sunday school superintendent, and a valuable counselor and devoted worker, until his death, which occurred in 1865, at the age of sixty-six.

As there were now two vacancies in the board of deacons, George W. Lloyd and Benjamin Eastburn were elected, and publicly set apart to that office, the pastor preaching a sermon appropriate to the occasion.

March 14, 1852, Charles E. Aaron was baptized, and the next month elected to the office of clerk. Up to this time the office had been filled by S. D. Philips and Alfred Scattergood.

June twentieth, of this year, Pastor Cornwell tendered his resignation, which was accepted, with the request that he continue his labors as long as it may suit his convenience, but he removed at once to Bridgeton, N. J., where he had received a call, and where he labored with great acceptance for years.

Mr. Cornwell's pastorate was not, in all respects, a successful one, but he was a good man and a thorough-going Baptist, more pronounced than many who had not been educated in the Pedobaptist faith. He was also very strong in his anti-slavery convictions. He died at the age of fifty, mourned by a devoted family and many warm friends in the denomination.

An effort was now made to induce Rev. Hiram Hutchins, whose great popularity in Norristown had not waned, to return to this field. He expressed a strong desire to do so, but felt that duty demanded that he remain with his church in Charlestown, Mass. In October, the church, by a rising vote, decided

unanimously to call Rev. Duncan Dunbar, of New York city, who had been proposed by Mr. Aaron. Upon being notified of this call, Mr. Dunbar stated that circumstances rendered it impossible for him to accept, but that he would be willing to serve them as supply, for a time. The church was instructed to invite him to come as early as possible and remain as long as convenient. He supplied the pulpit for about six months, for which he received seventy dollars per month.

The Rev. Duncan Dunbar was a Scotchman, and over sixty years of age, at this time. He was converted at the age of nineteen. After his conversion, for a considerable period, he was greatly exercised upon the Scriptural mode and subjects of baptism. At length his mind found rest in the adoption of believer's baptism. He came to America in 1823, and was pastor of important churches in Boston and New York city. He also had a brief, but successful ministry, with the Second Church, of Philadelphia. As a preacher, Mr. Dunbar was earnest, sympathetic, and full of spiritual life. In his long ministry he had abundant evidence of the blessing of God. He died in 1864.

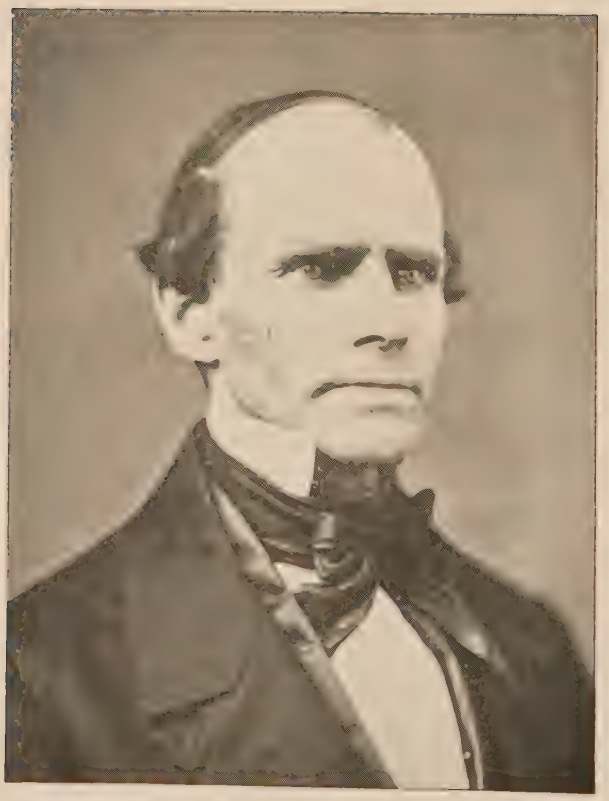
When Mr. Dunbar found that he could no longer stay with the church as supply, they undertook to secure at once a regular pastor. The name of Rev. Hiram Hutchins was again proposed, and on Sunday morning, May 1, 1853, the church voted with almost entire unanimity—so great was the charm of that name—to extend him a call. But this second attempt

to induce him to return to Norristown was also unsuccessful. Mr. Hutchins, while appreciating the continued esteem of the Norristown church, felt it his duty to remain in Charlestown. The church there also wrote a letter, giving their reasons for not being willing to part with their pastor.

Joseph E. Sagebeer, having asked the church to grant him a license to preach the Gospel, a committee was appointed to interview him, and after their report, on June sixth, the church voted unanimously, and with utmost heartiness, to grant the license.

Mr. Sagebeer was baptized at the age of sixteen, by the Rev. Robert F. Young. He united with the Norristown church by letter, in 1845. In 1856, three years after receiving his license, he was ordained at Balligomingo. He became an excellent preacher, persuasive and convincing. For an uninterrupted period of thirty-three years he was a faithful and successful minister of Christ. He died while pastor of the Coatesville church, June 5, 1890.

The church, still being without a pastor, Rev. E. R. Warren was engaged as supply, at fifty dollars per month. The pulpit was also supplied by Rev. J. Newton Brown.



ROSWELL CHENEY

Pastor from July, 1854, to March, 1859.

CHAPTER X.

Pastorate of Rev. Roswell Cheney to that of Rev. Alfred Pinney—July, 1854, to June, 1860.

It was nearly two years after Mr. Cornwell's resignation before a pastor was secured. Finally, on Sunday morning, the twenty-sixth of February, 1854, the church, by a unanimous vote, decided to call Rev. Roswell Cheney, of Erie County, Pa., to the pastoral charge, which he formally accepted, on the third of July. His salary was fixed at $800 per annum, to be paid monthly.

In April preceding, the church was asked to send delegates to meet in council, on the nineteenth of that month, to take into consideration the propriety of constituting the brethren at Cold Point an independent Baptist church.

In this year, a very important resolution was passed, by which the church decided to contribute to the various benevolent objects of the day by regular collections, at stated times; and that when agents visited Norristown they would be at liberty to see members personally, without receiving public collections in the church.

On the fourth of June, another deacon was chosen, in the person of Isaac Johnson, who had lately been received from Lower Providence.

About this time there was some thought of removing the headquarters of the American Baptist Free Mission Society and its official organ, "The American Baptist," from New York city to some locality where there would be less danger of lawless violence, and where they would be insured legal protection and hearty co-operation, and an effort was made by this church to have them locate in Norristown. Pastor Cheney submitted the following resolution: "That if, in the judgment of the trustees of the American Free Mission Society, a removal of the 'American Baptist' and of the seat of the Society's operations be deemed necessary, we most cordially invite the society to make Norristown their place of publication and the headquarters of its future efforts, and we hereby pledge the society our earnest co-operation." The resolution was adopted, but the removal was never effected.

The great panic of 1857 was now pending. There was general financial depression. The church, like other institutions, was greatly straitened to obtain means to meet its current obligations. A committee of ten persons was appointed to visit every member of the congregation to obtain voluntary contributions. This method of collecting proved remarkably successful, so that the church was enabled to meet all its ordinary obligations, and increase, somewhat, its offerings to benevolent objects. The total amount

raised for benevolence, in 1855, was three hundred and forty-four dollars. Of this amount, two hundred and two dollars went to the Free Mission Society. In 1857, they raised four hundred and eighty-two dollars, the largest amount, thus far, in the history of the church. Of this, one hundred and ninety dollars was for the Free Mission Society. The membership, in this year, was two hundred and seventy-eight. The next year the offering for benevolence was four hundred and forty-seven dollars, and sixty dollars went to McGrawville College. This is the first time the church offering for education was distinctly designated for this institution.

The college at McGrawville, N. Y., was founded and maintained by the friends and advocates of abolition. It was undenominational in character, and was opened to students, irrespective of color or sex. For a number of years it was quite a prosperous institution. Several unsuccessful attempts were made, by the trustees, to secure Samuel Aaron for its president.

On the question of using unfermented wine for the Lord's Supper, the Norristown church was quite as advanced as along other lines of reform. At this time, a committee was appointed, whose duty it should be to prepare the wine needed for communion purposes from the pure juice of the grape, thus putting themselves on record against the use of unfermented wine. Twenty-five years later, the question was much agitated, throughout the country, among many evangelical churches. The sentiment

became so strong against the alcoholic wine that nearly all churches adopted the use of unfermented wine.

At a regular meeting of the church, held May 3, 1858, delegates were appointed to meet in council, at Pottstown, Pa., May 26, 1858, to consider the propriety of recognizing the brethren there as an independent Baptist church. This new enterprise soon became a strong and influential church in the association.

On Sunday morning, March 18, 1859, Mr. Cheney presented his resignation as pastor of the church. They voted, unanimously, not to accept it, and a committee was appointed to notify the pastor of the action, and to urge him to withdraw his resignation. In a formal reply, he expressed his appreciation of the esteem and confidence manifested in the cogency of their appeal to him to remain with the church, but he could not be induced to reverse his decision.

Rev. Roswell Cheney was pastor of the church for nearly five years, and so had the distinction of having the longest pastorate of any one who had thus far served the church in that capacity. It was not only the longest, but, in some respects, the most successful and prosperous. True, there had been no great ingathering; only about forty persons were received by baptism, during the five years of his ministry, and the church membership increased only from two hundred and fifty-four to two hundred and seventy-two, but it was a period of great unrest and disturbance throughout the country. The minds of

the people, everywhere, were turned to the paramount issue of slavery, and the thoughts of all were upon the now impending and threatening war. Many, in such times, would become absorbed in the exciting affairs of the nation, and indifferent to spiritual interests; yet, the body of the church remained faithful, and the fires of patriotism kept brightly burning.

The offerings, both for home church expenses and benevolent objects, were larger and more uniform, during this pastorate, than at any previous period. Mr. Cheney was held in high esteem, by the church, and was greatly respected in the community. He was an able preacher, a safe leader, and a faithful pastor, and as devoted to his people as they were to him. In their letter to the association the brethren bore testimony to "his remarkable simplicity, integrity, moral courage, humanity, able exposition of divine truths, advocacy of universal charity, and his deserved enjoyment of the respect and confidence of the church and community."

The following brethren were active and prominent, during this pastorate: Samuel Aaron, S. D. Phillips, Benjamin Eastburn, John McCrea, Thomas Shaw, William White, Isaac Johnson, George Wright, D. J. and M. H. McVaugh, Thomas Scattergood, Isaac Styer, Samuel Overholtzer, Abner Supplee, Thomas D. Abraham, John G. Reese and others. A loss to the church, as great as that of their beloved pastor, was occasioned by the removal of Rev. Samuel Aaron and family to Mount Holly, New Jersey, in December,

1859. Mr. Aaron had been a member of the church, and the most prominent figure in all its spiritual interests, for nearly twenty years. During this time, there had been four pastors, beside himself and a number of supplies. Nearly all of them were strong men and faithful workers. But Mr. Aaron's influence was the most potent factor in the shaping and the development of the church's life and character, throughout this period. The influence of his great mind, his warm heart, his noble life, his eloquent words, is still seen and felt. From the year 1840 to 1859, his name appears as a delegate in the minutes of every session of the Central Union Association. He was the recognized leader and distinguished champion of the advanced and aggressive wing of the great questions that stirred the hearts of men in those days. He was not always present, but, even when absent, his influence was felt, and his sentiments were usually expressed in the Norristown letter, and in many of the resolutions placed before the body.

His son, Charles E. Aaron, was, also, an active and useful member of the church, from the time of his conversion. He was clerk of the church from April 10, 1852, to the fall of 1859. Mrs. Aaron and the daughters were, also, active and earnest Christians.

On Sunday morning, October 23, 1859, a vote was taken, inviting Rev. Thomas J. Thomas to supply the pulpit for six months. The invitation was accepted, and Mr. Thomas filled the pulpit with much acceptance, for that time.

John L. Tustin was now made church clerk. M. H. McVaugh continued to act as assistant clerk, as he had done for some time.

John G. Reese and George Wright were elected deacons, to fill the vacancies caused by the removal of Deacons Thomas Scattergood and Isaac Johnson. The new deacons were duly ordained, at a meeting for that purpose, Sunday afternoon, November 27, 1859.

Among those excluded, this year, was Mrs. Lydia Oram, for neglect of Christian duty and *slave holding*.

CHAPTER XI.

Life of Rev. Samuel Aaron.

The influence of the remarkable man of God, whose name stands at the head of this page, was so widely extended and his work of so noble and enduring a character that it will be fitting to devote some space to a review of his life and labors.

Samuel Aaron was born in New Britain township, Bucks County, Pa., October 19, 1800. He was of Welsh-Irish descent. His parents were persons of sincere and humble piety, who endeavored to train their children to know and love the Lord. They were both consistent members of the Baptist church. Samuel Aaron was left an orphan at an early age. He was then placed under the guardianship of his uncle, a kind hearted man, but, unfortunately, addicted to habits of intemperance. Doubtless this is where Mr. Aaron's bitter hatred of the drink traffic had its genesis.

At the age of sixteen he entered the academy at Doylestown, Pa., taught by Rev. Uriah DuBois. Here he advanced rapidly in his studies, and, at the age of twenty, he connected himself with the classical and mathematical school of John Gummere, at Burlington, N. J. He entered as a student, but soon

became an assistant teacher. Mr. Aaron was, from his youth up, of pure morals and exemplary habits, but he soon saw that something more than this was required of him, so, at the age of twenty-six, he publicly confessed Christ and united with the Baptist church at Burlington. Being persuaded that he was divinely called to the ministry, Mr. Aaron was, some months after his conversion, ordained, and in 1828 became pastor of the church at New Britain, Pa., being at the same time principal of the Doyelstown Academy. In 1830 he had the sad misfortune to lose his wife. Three years after he married again, and removed to Burlington, N. J. Here he was elected principal of the Burlington High School. In addition to the work of conducting a large school, Mr. Aaron was, for five years, pastor of the Burlington Baptist Church. While here he frequently delivered public addresses on scientific subjects and questions of moral reform. It was in these addresses and lectures that his ability as a public speaker, which so distinguished him in after years, first became known.

In 1838, the honorary degree of Master of Arts was conferred upon Mr. Aaron by Brown University, Francis Wayland, President.

In 1841, he came to Norristown, in response to the call of the Baptist church there, and entered upon his double duty of pastor and teacher.

Mr. Aaron's success as a pastor has been noticed in a previous chapter. He also achieved great success and won deserved popularity as a teacher. But he was most distinguished, at this time, as the champion

of temperance and anti-slavery. On these high themes he spoke with an eloquence that was thrilling and with a logic that was irresistible. His fearless and scathing attacks on the liquor traffic brought upon him the enmity and persecution of those allied to this nefarious business. Once, while he was teaching in the Norristown Academy, after he had dismissed his school and was in the building alone, he was attacked by two cowardly ruffians, the McClenaghan brothers, of Spring Mill, and brutally beaten with raw-hide whips. They alleged, as their provocation, a personal offence given to them in one of Mr. Aaron's temperance addresses. For this heinous crime they were arrested, convicted, and mildly sentenced to pay a fine of thirty dollars, and the short imprisonment of thirty days in the county jail. Judge Burnside, who gave the sentence, is said to have stated that he was not giving his own decision, or it would have been the utmost extent of the law, but he was overruled by two associate judges, who were in sympathy with the liquor venders. The scars which he received at that time he carried with him to the grave.

The popular teacher's success had now become so great that he was warranted in opening a school upon a much more elaborate plan than was possible in the town academy. He therefore purchased a tract of land on Sandy Street, erected buildings, and opened a school for young men, which he christened Treemount Seminary. A more beautiful site could not have been secured anywhere in the country. The school was

formally opened in December, 1844. He now resigned the pastorate of the church, and devoted himself, with all the energy of his being, to Treemount.

His labors were speedily rewarded. The school soon became famous throughout eastern Pennsylvania and New Jersey, and was widely known in many sections of the entire country. Beside the common branches, instruction was given in higher mathematics, the sciences, and Latin, Greek, French and German. Many of the business and professional men of Norristown and vicinity secured their entire educational equipment for life, in this institution. Not a few, through its influence and training, have become earnest and useful ministers of the Gospel. There were as many as two hundred and thirty-three students enrolled in a year, and the institution became a very profitable business. During the fifteen years that Mr. Aaron was principal of the school, he was a regular worshipper at the Baptist church, unless called away to speak or preach elsewhere. His accustomed place was on the pulpit platform with the pastor, whom he would invariably assist in the services. Rev. Hiram Hutchins, in his reminiscences of the Norristown pastorate, says: "At first, the talents and eloquence of Brother Aaron embarrassed me, making me timid, when preaching before him. This timidity soon wore away, however, for I found him free from any spirit of improper criticism, and a very charitable hearer. He was, moreover, a devoted and firm friend. Never, while memory lasts, shall I forget his kindness to me."

When Mr. Aaron came to Norristown, the Baptist church was far from being unanimous on the slavery question, while the community was almost wholly against him. Here and there were men who saw eye to eye with him, but they were notable exceptions. This made but little difference to Mr. Aaron. He would rather be right alone, than wrong with all the world. He was a man of deep convictions and perfectly fearless in their defense. His whole being seemed pitted against anything that was essentially wrong, and what was essentially wrong to him, no custom, or legislation, or tradition, could make right. His love of the truth was the mastering and controlling passion of his soul. This virtue was innate with him, and showed itself in the great frankness, openness and simplicity of his character, and in an imperious disdain of all sin and wrong doing, either in the individual, or the state. Homer's couplet might be appropriately applied to him :

"That man within my soul I hate,
Even as the gates of hell,
Who speaks fair words, but, in his heart,
Dark lies and treachery dwell."

He was a born orator. He was dramatic in the best sense. There was nothing about his oratory that was studied or affected. Everything came as the spontaneous, fervid outburst of nature.

When combating a great and institutional evil, like human bondage, he dealt fierce invective, with burning and transcendent eloquence. He knew how to move men. He understood human nature.

No orator could ever do more by a single word, and he was especially gifted in quick and apt retort. He was always perfect master of himself, and of the situation.

Mr. Aaron's warm heart went out in sympathy with all sincere Christians of every denomination, but he was especially devoted to his own church, and was ever ready to defend the principles of the Baptist faith. His debate, which continued through many evenings, with Rev. J. H. Lightburn, of the Methdist church, on Scriptural Baptism, was long remembered by the citizens of Norristown. In this discussion, Mr. Aaron proved much more than a match for his opponent, not only in scholarship and Biblical knowledge, but also in the keenness of his logic.

As a reformer, Mr. Aaron was a firm believer in the efficacy of the ballot, when wisely cast and fairly counted, to correct civil and social evils.

"We show our religion," he said, "by the way we vote. Our voting is a prayer, and when I vote for a drunken, unprincipled man, it is equivalent to a prayer to the Almighty. If good men would scratch out the names of those unworthy to fill public offices, there are enough to prevent their nomination."

In 1854, Mr. Aaron was the Free Soil party's candidate for Congress, in this district. In 1856, he was an active participant in the great Republican convention at Philadelphia, which nominated Freemont for the Presidency. In the year 1859, Norristown was compelled to witness the removal of this great man from the town and state.

In the panic of 1857, many of Norristown's strongest business men became financially involved. Mr. Aaron had given endorsements for friends, whose failure carried him down with them. Thus, being overwhelmed with financial embarrassment, he was forced to surrender the possession of the institution he had founded and fostered to his creditors.

Mr. Aaron's financial failure, and his consequent abandonment of Treemount and removal from Norristown, was a great misfortune to the entire community. For nearly twenty years he was intimately connected with every improvement of a moral, social or religious nature, in Montgomery county. "During that time," says the Norristown *Republican*, "no plan for the elevation of society, or the improvement of the town and county, wanted his endorsement or co-operation, and no one who had a plea of real charity to prefer, or enterprise of benevolence to inaugurate, was ever turned empty away from his door. Unselfishness, excess of charity and benevolence combined, prevented his acquisition of wealth. It is doubtful if any man in eastern Pennsylvania wielded a deeper or wider influence in moulding the rising generation, or giving the impress of free thought to others in active life.

John W. Lock, Ph. D., who was, for a time, associated with him in the Treemount Seminary, says that Mr. Aaron made the most lasting impression upon the community of any man who has ever lived here. Davis, in his history of Bucks county, says: "He was one of the most brilliant men Bucks county ever produced."

Mr. Auge, in his "Men of Montgomery County," writes: "The most noted clergyman that has figured in Montgomery County annals for forty years was undoubtedly Rev. Samuel Aaron. In mere scholastic sermonizing, or revival power, we may have had his superiors, but in breadth of intellect, exalted imagination, gifts of oratory, melting pathos, abounding charity and liberality, both of religious sentiment and alms-giving, we never had a greater. He was preacher, politician, philanthrophist and teacher, all combined in one."

Theodore W. Bean, in his history of Montgomery County, writes "As an educator, he left a lasting impress of his individuality upon his scholars, and all of the young men who studied under him acknowledged his conscientiousness as a teacher."

By Mr. Aaron's removal, the poor lost a faithful helper, the oppressed a watchful advocate, the school an inspiring instructor, the wise an able counselor, the learned a genial companion, the cause of reform a staunch and stalwart defender, and the church a devoted friend and trusted leader.

His departure was as sore a trial to Mr. Aaron himself and his family as it was to his friends. Treemount Seminary, next to the church, had long been the idol of his heart. Here too was his pleasant home, which he had beautified and adorned in accordance with his taste and enterprise, and where he, naturally, anticipated passing the closing years of his life.

He took leave of all these sacred associations, December, 1859. The Baptist Church of Mount Holly, N. J., had given him a hearty and unanimous call to become their pastor. This he accepted, and at the same time, assisted by his son, Charles E. Aaron, opened the Mount Holly Institute. The school obtained a liberal patronage, and Mr. Aaron was soon happy in his work. In a letter to a Norristown friend, he wrote, "A new world is spread out before me, and nothing seems wanting to my felicity but the presence of my dear ones, the payment of my debts, and the conversion of souls."

During his six years residence in Mount Holly, his time was fully occupied in teaching, preaching and in good works generally. He was frequently called upon for public addresses and lectures. His correspondence was also extensive, during these closing years of his life. Among those who wrote him frequently, in these perilous days of the war, were Wendell Phillips, Charles D. Cleveland, Charles S. Bates, John G. Whittier and William Henry Channing.

He enjoyed the confidence and esteem of many noted men in the army and in the United States Congress. At the time of his death, he was under an appointment to preach in the Hall of Representatives, at Washington. The chaplain, W. H. Channing, in his invitation to him, wrote, "it will give us pleasure to place the Hall of Representatives at the service of one so distinguished for earnest advocacy of the cause of freedom."

Among the world's noble men, her educators, her patriots, her Gospel preachers and Christian philanthrophists, he stood and labored in the front rank. He lived just long enough to see the triumph of the cause he had so long and eloquently defended, and to hear the news of the nation's victory.

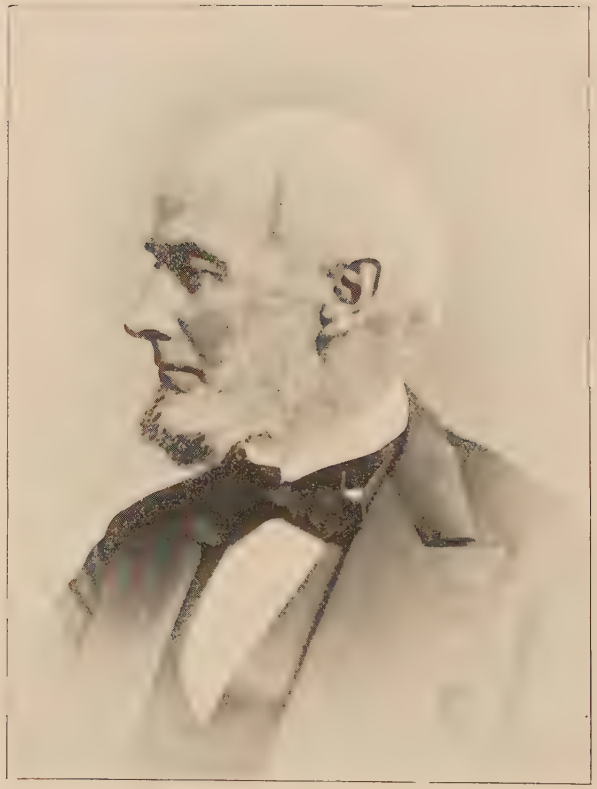
He died peacefully and in the conscious triumph of the Christian's hope, on the evening of April 11, 1865, in the sixty-fifth year of his age. During his last illness, which was of short duration, he took a lively interest in all that was transpiring in the nation. His last hours were spent in reading and expounding to those who ministered to him portions of that precious Word, which had been his guide all through life. On the day of his death, he asked a friend to open the windows of his room, so that he might inhale "the glory of the heavens." It was a beautiful morning in the spring, his favorite season. As he looked at the clear sky, and then at the trees and grass and flowers, he said, "how beautiful are all of God's works."

Upon hearing of the fall of Richmond and the surrender of Lee, a few hours before his death, he exclaimed, "Thank God; I rejoice in the salvation of my country." His last words were: "Thy grace is sufficient for me," and thus, surrounded by his sorrowing family and friends, "he fell asleep in Jesus."

"Servant of God, well done!
Thy glorious warfare's past;
The battle's fought, the race is won,
And thou art crowned at last."

His funeral, which was held on the fourteenth of April, the day that Lincoln was assassinated, was largely attended by many from distant places. The funeral sermon was preached by Rev. William S. Hall, of Philadelphia.

A marble monument, erected by the Baptist church of Mount Holly, bears this appropriate inscription: "Honored as a minister, beloved as a friend, revered as a teacher of youth, he is mourned as the guide and comforter of many."



ALFRED PINNEY

Pastor from June, 1860, to November, 1862.

CHAPTER XII.

Pastorate of Rev. Alfred Pinney to that of Rev. Hardin Wheat—June, 1860, to July, 1863.

In May, 1860, Rev. Alfred Pinney, of Zanesville, Ohio, was called as pastor, at a salary of eight hundred dollars per annum, or six hundred and fifty dollars and parsonage. The call was accepted, and the new pastor began his labors the first of June.

The Free Mission Society held its meeting with the church on the thirtieth and thirty-first of May.

During the autumn there were some repairs and improvements made to the house of worship, at a cost of one thousand dollars. Before this time the weekly prayer meetings had been held on Saturday evening. In September the time was changed to Friday evening. It was during this year that the ladies of the church took the first step looking to their organization for more efficient work among them. They formed what was known as a sinking fund for the purpose of aiding the church in its financial affairs.

The church was now passing through one of the most trying and dispiriting periods of its existence. These were dark days in American history, and the church sympathized deeply with the afflicted nation. The long pending war had begun in earnest. The

war spirit swept over the country like wild-fire. The stars and stripes, the symbol of Revolutionary glory and of national unity, were everywhere unfurled. The best men in the church and out of it were eager to enlist in the army. But the outlook was disheartening. The union army had been defeated with terrible loss, at the battle of Bull Run. The northern people were, at first, chagrined by this defeat. Then came a renewal of determination. Congress voted five hundred million dollars and five hundred thousand men. President Lincoln had great faith in prayer. He urged all Christians, who loved their country, to petition Almighty God in behalf of the nation, in this time of darkness and distress. He appointed Thursday, September 26, as a day of prayer. The Norristown Church, in common with northern churches generally, voted to devote the entire day to prayer and supplication for the union and the cause of freedom. The ultimate success of the northern army and the happy termination of the war are doubtless due more than men are wont to think to the faithful fervent prayers of the patriotic churches of the north.

These stirring events so engaged the thoughts of the people, that little room was left for the ordinary duties of the church, or the usual spiritual exercises. Men's minds were occupied with the one great question of the life of the nation. There was much coldness and indifference on the part of many members. It was a season of unusual barrenness and declension. There were but few conversions. Only nineteen baptisms are recorded for the whole pastorate of two

years and a half. The number of exclusions and erasures exceeded the number of baptisms. The church was unable to meet its current expenses. There was not entire sympathy between pastor and people, and on the thirtieth of November, 1862, Mr. Pinney resigned the pastoral charge.

There were several things that conspired together to prevent any great success, during the ministry of Pastor Pinney. In the first place, he had the misfortune to serve the church during a very trying period. The disturbed condition of the country, and the consequent diversion of the minds of the people from spiritual things, were not conducive to any great religious awakening. In the second place, Mr. Pinney was not well adapted to this field. He was not so strong a man, nor so able a preacher, as some of those who preceded him. The character of the church had been shaped and developed by such forceful preachers and patriotic leaders as David Bernard, Samuel Aaron, Hiram Hutchins, Roswell Cheney, and others, whose convictions were more fervid and whose sentiments were more pronounced than those held by Mr. Pinney. Although he was not altogether suited for the work of so advanced and progressive a church, Mr. Pinney was a good man, and, in many respects, a faithful and earnest worker. He was much interested in the Sunday school, and was, for a time, its superintendent. If no great success was achieved, it still remains to be said, to his credit and honor, that he left the church a united and harmonious body, free from disturbing factions and discordant elements.

After the resignation of Mr. Pinney, in November, he continued as supply for several months, but the church was pastorless from November to the following July. In their letter to the association, in June, 1863, they "speak of the past year as one of comparative unfruitfulness, deplore their lukewarmness, and lament the little progress they have made heavenward." The number of members reported, this year, was two hundred and twenty-seven, the smallest number since 1838, six years after the organization of the church. In this same letter, in which they lament the lack of spiritual progress, they "reiterate their interest in their country's conflict, and hail President Lincoln's proclamation of freedom with great delight. They continue to pray for peace in the land, and that with the close of the war, slavery, the cause of it, may end.

HARDIN WHEAT

Pastor from July, 1863, to October, 1870.

CHAPTER XIII.

Pastorate of Rev. Hardin Wheat to that of Rev. George Frear—July, 1863, to February, 1872.

On Sunday morning, May 24, 1863, the church extended a call to Rev. Hardin Wheat, of Eaton, N. Y., to become their pastor. He accepted the invitation and entered upon his labors the first of July.

Mr. Wheat was only twenty-eight years of age, when he came to Norristown. He was born in Franklin, Delaware County, New Jersey, in 1835, and was converted at the age of seventeen, during a revival conducted by Evangelist A. B. Earle. Being convinced of his call of God to the work of the ministry, he entered Madison (Colgate) University in in 1857, and graduated four years later, at the age of twenty-six. Without waiting to take a course in the theological seminary, he entered at once upon his chosen work, being ordained as pastor of the Baptist church in Eaton, N. Y He was there for nearly two years, when he resigned to accept the call to Norristown.

During his student life and also while pastor at Eaton, Mr. Wheat had been known as a firm and unflinching supporter of the anti-slavery cause and

temperance reform. It was this that brought the young minister, through the influence of Rev. G. F. Post, to the notice of the church in Norristown, and Mr. Wheat himself felt that there was a peculiar fitness in that Providence which had called him to become the pastor of a people whose views, on all questions of social and civil reform, so thoroughly coincided with his own.

It was during those days of fearful suspense, just before the battle of Gettysburg, that Mr. Wheat left Eaton for his new field. As he was leaving, a friend, alluding to the change he was making, asked him if it would not be wiser to wait a few days, as, should the enemy prove victorious, their next point of attack might be Philadelphia and that vicinity. Mr. Wheat replied, "So much the more then will the church need its pastor." Already he had identified himself with that people, and he was longing to be at the post of duty, which was ever to him the post of honor and of privilege, and no threatening danger could detain him when duty called. Arrived at Norristown, he found anxiety depicted on almost every countenance. But before the patriotic young pastor had preached his first sermon to his new people, Sunday, July fifth, the decisive battle had been fought and General Lee had recrossed the Potomac. The news of this wonderful victory had a most cheering and animating effect upon all those who had been waiting with bated breath, but unfaltering hopes and fervent prayers, for the success of a righteous cause. With the repulse of the invading foe, the tide of the war

rolled backward, and those who had enlisted merely to meet that emergency soon returned to their homes, and business again resumed its wonted course.

Mr. Wheat was soon earnestly engaged in his work, using every moment that could be spared from his study in seeking out and becoming acquainted with his people, and assuredly they needed the care and prayers of a tender shepherd. From nearly every home some loved one had gone, and not a few fathers, husbands and brothers were still on the battle-fields of the South, or lying wounded and helpless in Northern hospitals.

With the prospect of a successful issue of the war and the triumph of freedom, all became more hopeful. Renewed zeal was manifested along all lines of church activity. The new pastor gave himself with a will to the work of building up the congregation. Everything took on new life; conversions and baptisms became quite frequent. During the year twenty-five persons were baptized and fifteen were received by letter. Of those received by baptism, eighteen were from the Sunday school.

With those spiritual advances came financial prosperity. On the sixteenth of February, 1864, it was voted to purchase a musical instrument for use in divine services. M. H. McVaugh and J. L. Tustin were appointed a committee to procure the instrument, which they did, at a cost of one hundred and thirty-seven dollars. D. J. McVaugh stated that, as there was no one in the church to perform on this instrument, the members of the choir had invited

Miss A. E. Balleau to do so for the time being. It was then resolved that the church pay her seventy-five dollars per year for her services. The next year her salary was increased to twenty-five dollars a quarter, as organist and music director. In December the church gave evidence, in a very material and practical way, of their appreciation of the faithful labors of their pastor by increasing his salary two hundred dollars per year.

At the same time the congregation, by the advice of the trustees, made a most egregious financial blunder in selling their parsonage without procuring another. It is difficult to understand how men, who showed so much business tact and forethought in some respects, should be so short-sighted as to make so great a mistake, both for their own time and the future welfare of the church.

April 4, 1865, J. L. Tustin resigned the office of clerk and J. T. Ely was appointed.

During this year a resolution was passed assessing each member one dollar per year, in addition to what they had been paying for the current expenses. The names of persons failing to comply with this requirement were to be read out publicly, at the end of the year.

During this same year the pastor's salary was again increased, making it one thousand dollars per annum. This was a mark not only of the magnanimous and generous spirit of the congregation, but also of the church's financial and spiritual prosperity. One thousand dollars was a large salary for a minister,

in those days, and one which but few churches were able to pay, and the membership was then only two hundred and sixty-seven.

The Central Union Association met with the church, this year, for the first time since 1848, a period of seventeen years. Many resolutions were passed, at this session, regarding the evangelization and education of the freedmen. The churches were urged to aid in their moral, social and intellectual elevation. The abstract of the Norristown letter says: "Extend to the association a cheerful and cordial welcome to their house of worship and to their hospitalities. They have enjoyed many tokens of the divine favor; congregations are good; Sabbath school is flourishing; report four large and prosperous Bible classes; mention the demise of their esteemed brother, John Johnson, who has not been heard from since the terrible battle of the Wilderness; they sorrow over the martyrdom of the 'father and redeemer of our country;' they rejoice over the success of our arms, and the destruction of the inhuman system of American slavery, and hail, with grateful emotions, the return of peace; mention, with affection and sorrow, the death of Rev. Samuel Aaron, who was formerly their beloved and faithful pastor—greatly beloved in life; in death much lamented."

The year 1866 was an uneventful one, but the work moved steadily and harmoniously along. The number reported to the association was three hundred and three. Nineteen had been received by baptism and

twenty-seven by letter. In those palmy days it was not unusual for the number received by letter from other churches to exceed the number received by conversion and baptism. After the war, Norristown grew rapidly for a number of years. New families were constantly moving into the town. The Baptists received a fair proportion of those, so that the church grew rapidly, without the labor required when the additions come principally from new converts.

In April, 1867, J. T. Ely resigned as clerk and C. H. Detwiler was chosen to that office.

In July of this year, it was voted to adopt a set of by-laws and rules of order, for the government of the church. Those, together with the articles of faith and church covenant, were printed and bound as a booklet, called the "Church Manual."

At the regular business meeting in October, on motion of Deacon N. B. Johnson, it was voted to add two hundred dollars more to Pastor Wheat's salary, making it one thousand two hundred dollars. This was the third time his salary had been increased, inside of four years.

During this season there were few conversions. Only nine baptisms were reported for the whole Associational year; fourteen were received by letter, and two by experience. In their annual letter they report large congregations; express their interest in the efforts of the civil government to solve its problem of re-construction; lament the treachery of some in power; manifest more than usual interest in the cause of temperance; sustain two Sabbath schools, and

express gratitude for the manifestation of the Master's presence. They mourn the loss of four esteemed members. Charles Cauffman, one of the number, was a most devoted and influential Christian, zealous in every good work.

On the thirteenth of November, 1867, a special meeting was called to take into consideration the building of a new house of worship. After due consideration, it was resolved to build a new house, adequate to meet the demands of the church, as soon as twenty-five thousand dollars should be subscribed. A committee of three was appointed, consisting of Deacon David Allabough, Samuel D. Delp and C. H. Detwiler, to solicit subscriptions.

This building project constituted the chief business of the church, at all their regular business meetings and at every called meeting, for six years, or until the house was finally built, in 1873. It was first decided to rebuild on the old site. Afterwards, many favored building on DeKalb Street and further out. Accordingly, a lot was purchased on the corner of DeKalb and Jacoby Streets. An effort was made to sell the property on the corner of Swede and Airy Streets. Fifteen thousand dollars was the price asked. Thirteen thousand was offered for it. Many were in favor of accepting the offer. Finally, after vacillating between the two places for three years, it was voted, April 18, 1870, to dispose of the property on DeKalb and Jacoby Streets and to build according to the original plan, on the old site, Swede and Airy Streets. The trustees succeeded in selling the DeKalb

Street property soon after. Subsequent years have abundantly testified to the wisdom of rebuilding on the present site, which is now and is likely to be for years to come, a central, convenient and suitable location. There is not now a more desirable site for the old First Church than the same historical and hallowed foundation where it was first built.

In the year 1868, conversions were more frequent. There were baptisms during three different months, and thirty-nine, in all, were buried with Christ in baptism, during the year. The present excellent practice of baptizing almost every month in the year and, for long seasons, every Sunday in the month, was then unknown. They apparently depended more upon special seasons and extra meetings and less upon the regular weekly services, as times for ingatherings, than the church is accustomed to do now. Many of those baptized during the year became valuable and influential members of the church. The number of members was now officially stated to be three hundred and fifty-eight. This was the largest membership in the history of the church. They now enjoyed the distinction of being the largest church in the Association, Frankford being next in size. The First Philadelphia withdrew from the association in 1858.

On April 12, 1869, two more deacons were elected—James Shannon and C. H. Detwiler. Both were spiritually-minded men and hence suited to the office to which they had been elevated.

The year 1869 was a comparatively unfruitful one in the way of ingatherings. Only six were baptized

during the year, but fifteen were received by letter. Though not a time of reaping, it was certainly a time of sowing, for the next year was the banner year in the history of the church, in respect to additions by baptism.

The week of prayer was followed by a most gracious revival. Twenty-one were received for baptism on the twenty-ninth of January, thirty on the fourth of February, eight on the eleventh, twenty-three on the twenty-fifth, nine on the twelfth of March, six on the nineteenth, one in April and two in August—one hundred and two in all. These did not all continue to walk with the Lord, but many of them remain faithful to this day, and are among the church's most loyal and devoted members.

The Sunday school work was also very prosperous, at this time. Two schools were reported. There were thirty-three teachers and two hundred and eighty scholars. This is the largest number in the history of the school. Of the one hundred and two baptisms, seventy-five were from the Sunday school.

This year of unprecedented prosperity proved to be the last of Mr. Wheat's pastorate. Although he was but thirty-five years of age, he was already broken in health. The responsibility and anxiety, connected with the labors of the large ingathering of this memorable winter of 1870, overtaxed his feeble physical powers and incapacitated him for preaching and pastoral duties. He was loath to leave a field of so many pleasant and precious memories, and where he was surrounded by such a host of loyal friends.

But it was evident, both to the church and to himself, that he could not, with safety to his health, longer continue the ministrations, or bear the exacting duties of this rapidly growing congregation. Accordingly, on the third of October, 1870, he resigned the pastoral charge. The resignation was accepted, but his salary was continued for four months. A donation of three hundred and twenty-five dollars was also made him by the members, and a committee, consisting of D. J. McVaugh, Samuel D. Delp and Dr. J. K. Weaver, was appointed to draft resolutions of respect, to be printed in the "National Baptist" and the "American Baptist."

The pastorate of Mr. Wheat was one of the most successful and satisfactory in the history of the church. He was not so strong a preacher as some who had preceded him, but what he may have lacked in ability he made up in zeal, faithfulness and untiring devotion. Although diffident and retiring, he was fearless in pursuing the path of duty. He was a man of much fervor and spiritual power, and devoted to his holy calling. He was an excellent pastor. He had an ardent love for the souls of his fellowmen and showed his adaptation to his divinely selected work by winning many to Christ. He was a man of tender sympathies and great kindness of heart.

Mr. Wheat moved to Millville, New Jersey, where his health improved considerably. After a time, he acted as supply for the church in this place. He then accepted a call to the church of Broadalbin, New York. The work here proved too great a tax upon

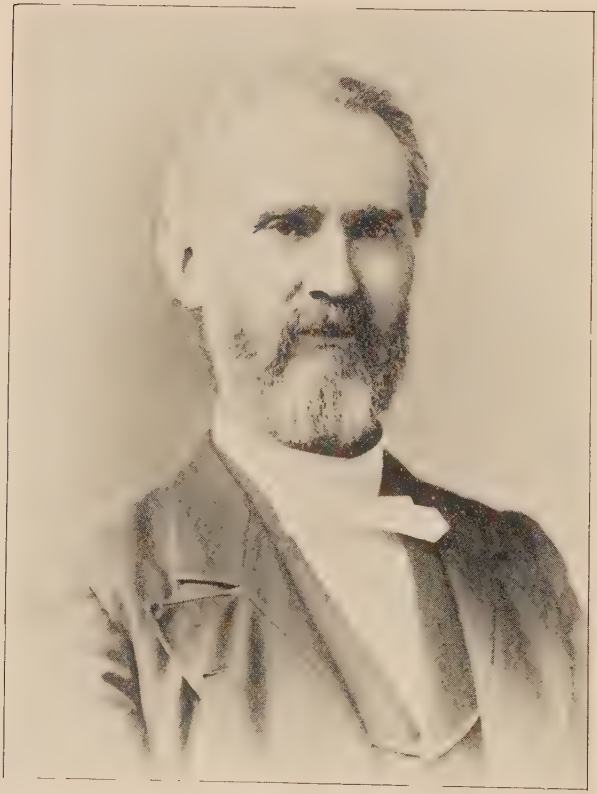
him, and his disabilities became so great he was compelled to resign. Then he removed to Palmyra, New York, where he served a pleasant village church, amid a loving and devoted people. But disease had done its work. After a brief service there his pure spirit passed away, in the year 1876, in the forty-second year of his age. He died triumphant in that faith in Christ which had strengthened him for manifold labors and sustained him in great afflictions. He died while yet young in years, but full of noble deeds and heavenly honors.

Among other things that contributed to the marked prosperity of the pastorate of Mr. Wheat was the unusually large number of valuable members who were received by letter from other churches, during his ministry. He baptized two hundred and thirteen. The membership was four hundred and eighty-six.

Among the many prominent, earnest workers in the church, those years, were: David Allabough, D. J. McVaugh, Thomas Shaw, Evan Davis, William White, George Wright, James Shannon, Thomas Scattergood, Alfred Scattergood, N. B. Johnson, M. H. McVaugh, Augustus Hart, C. H. Detwiler, Joseph E. Rapp, Henry Still, J. L. Tustin, J. T. Ely, J. McCrea, Charles Cauffman, Isaac Styer, E. B. Waltz, Samuel Overholtzer, Thomas D. Abraham, J. K. Weaver, M. D., J. Howard Arnold, Samuel Butz, G. W. Wainwright and many others just as faithful, including a host of notable, consecrated women.

At the same meeting in which Pastor Wheat's resignation was accepted, it was voted to hold business meetings on the first Monday evening of each month, instead of once in three months, as had been the custom. No reason is given for this change and it was surely an unwise move. Perhaps the church never had more legitimate business to transact than during the pastorate of Mr. Wheat, and certainly during no term of years have the business affairs of the church been better conducted. Ordinarily, the fewer business meetings there are the better. Some men can talk eloquently in business meetings, when a whole evening is given to this purpose, whose voices are never heard in prayer or praise. It is the consensus of opinion, among those who have had most experience as leaders in Christian work, that one or two, or, at the most, four distinctive business meetings in a year, is the most satisfactory method. The receiving and dismissing of members and many other matters can be appropriately attended to in connection with the appointed devotional services, as was done during Mr. Wheat's pastorate. Special meetings can always be called, when the business is of such importance as to warrant it. Much valuable time is wasted, and many misunderstandings and "causes of offense" have their genesis in these too frequent distinctive business meetings. A judiciary and advisory committee, before which all matters of business shall come, before being presented to the body, would contribute much to the harmony and success of many congregations. Then business which

should be laid before the whole body would be well matured before it is brought in, and so much unfortunate discussion would be avoided. In this way, a Baptist church can have all the advantages of churches which have sessions with legitimate functions and still retain its democratic character.



GEORGE FREAR

Pastor from February, 1872, to June, 1875.

CHAPTER XIV.

Pastorate of Rev. George Frear to that of Rev. Simeon Siegfried—February, 1872, to September, 1875.

After the resignation of the Rev. Hardin Wheat, the church was pastorless for sixteen months. There was some decline, naturally, during this interim, in the spiritual interests, and only two were received by baptism. But there was regular preaching by supplies, and the Sabbath school was well sustained. The pulpit committee, from time to time, recommended several well-known ministers of the denomination, among them, A. J. Rowland, D. D., J. R. Murphy, D. D., and Wm. H. Young, D. D., for the pastoral office, but they could not be secured. Rev. Mr. Wheat was also thought of. He would have been glad to return and the church would have been glad to receive him had his health been sufficiently restored to permit it.

Finally, on the third of December, 1871, Rev. George Frear, of Reading, was called, at a salary of one thousand and eight hundred dollars a year. He accepted the call and entered upon his duties February 1, 1872. At the installation services, which were held February twenty-second, John Peddie, D. D., preached the sermon, Lemuel Moss, D. D., delivered the charge to the pastor, and John H. Castle, D. D., that to the church.

J. D. Tustin, having resigned the position of chorister, and Miss Mary Tustin that of organist, March fourth, Dr. Philip Y. Eisenberg was chosen as chorister. Dr. Horace Still was, at the same time, elected organist, the church agreeing to pay him forty dollars a year. In 1874, his salary was increased to seventy-five dollars a year, and the chorister was allowed one hundred dollars a year. Dr. Still has held the position of organist for twenty-five years, and has been regarded as a skilled and accomplished musician. The Baptist hymn and tune book was adopted for use in the Sunday services.

The same year, the present plan of offering for the several benevolent objects of the denomination was adopted as follows: The annual offering for the Missionary Union, first Lord's Day in October; for the State Mission Society, the first Lord's Day in December; Home Mission Society, the first in February; Education Society, the first in April; the local Sabbath school, the first in June; the Publication Society, the first in August.

The chief event, during the pastorate of Mr. Frear, was the building of the present church edifice, on the corner of Swede and Airy Streets. A building committee of the following brethren was adopted, viz: Samuel L. Butz, Justus P. Leaver, M. H. McVaugh, C. H. Detwiler and Jos. E. Rapp. This committee employed an architect, and on February 3, 1873, reported a plan, together with specifications, for the new edifice. The work of taking down the old building, in which the congregation had worshipped

for forty years, was then begun, and the foundations were laid for the new, the corner stone being laid July 4, 1873. During the demolition of the old and the construction of the new house, the Sunday services were held in the court house, and the Wednesday and Friday evening meetings were held in Hill's Hall.

The work of building was now pushed rapidly forward, and the lecture room was ready for occupancy by the fifth of March, 1874. The entire structure was completed by November first. The taste and skill displayed in its erection called for universal admiration.

The dedication occurred on Sunday, November 15, 1874. The ceremonies were of an interesting and imposing character. In the morning the audience was large, even the aisles, hall and gallery were crowded. The services commenced with singing the Doxology, followed by the Lord's prayer. The choir sang the anthem, "Oh, How Beautiful is Zion, City of our Lord." The music during the entire day deserved special praise. Members of the choirs of several of the churches of the town rendered valuable assistance. Dr. Eisenberg led the singing and Dr. Still presided at the organ. After the reading of Psalms eighty-four and one hundred and thirty-two, and prayer by Pastor Frear, John Peddie, D. D., preached the sermon, from Luke 4 : 14, 15. This was followed by a hymn, written for the occasion. Pastor Frear then made a statement in regard to the building and furnishing of the church, and invited proposals to meet the claims incurred. The first subscription was one

thousand dollars from the Mite Society, and about one thousand dollars was received by miscellaneous offerings. The dedication prayer was offered by Rev. Wm. Smith. In the afternoon, P. S. Henson, D.D., preached from Judges 7: 7. In the evening, the sermon was by President Henry G. Weston, D. D. Pastor Frear then read a poem, written for the occasion by a member of the Sunday school.

The cost of the building, not including the furnishing, was twenty-five thousand, six hundred and eight-two dollars, of which twenty thousand dollars had been raised and paid at the time of the dedication.

The subscription committees had been engaged in collecting for several years, and had done faithful and successful work. The expense of furnishing the lecture room, which amounted to five hundred and eighty-two dollars, was chiefly borne by the Sunday school. The auditorium was furnished at a total cost of one thousand, nine hundred and fourteen dollars and ninety-four cents. This was assumed by the Mite Society, which, by heroic efforts, they succeeded in paying. The furniture in the pulpit, costing about one hundred and thirty five dollars, was purchased by the children in the Sunday school. The entire cost of the building when completed was, therefore, twenty-eight thousand and three hundred dollars. This seems almost impossible. It certainly required careful oversight to erect such an edifice at figures like those. This handsome brown stone structure, which adorns the south-west corner of Swede and Airy Streets, is a credit to Norristown and an honor to the Baptist

PRESENT CHURCH EDIFICE

denomination. It is conveniently and centrally located. It is in the Romanesque style of architecture. The dimensions are sixty-two by ninety-two feet. On the north-west corner is a turret, rising one hundred feet from the ground. There are three front doors, affording ample means of egress. The windows are filled with stained glass of a neat pattern, that in the large front window being of quite elaborate design. The basement is divided into a lecture room, forty-one by fifty-five feet; infant school room, twenty-three by twenty-five feet ; a parlor or committee room of the same size; also a library and secretaries' room. The auditorium is a beautiful and spacious room, with a seating capacity, on the main floor, of six hundred and sixty ; or about eight hundred, including the gallery. It has three aisles, and is seated with pews of oak and walnut, in semi-circular form, affording a full view of the pulpit from any part of the house. On each side of the pulpit are rooms for the use of candidates on the occasion of baptism. The ceiling and pulpit recesses are beautifully frescoed in neutral tints, the side walls being painted plain. The gas arrangements in the room are of rather novel style, it being lighted by means of a reflector of twenty-six burners in the ceiling, below which is suspended a corona of thirty-six cluster burners, and a small corona of four burners at the pulpit.

This splendid church edifice is a fitting testimonial of the careful oversight and wise direction of Pastor Frear, and a noble monument to the persevering labor and Christian beneficence of the faithful band of men

and women who carried the work on to its successful completion. During these years of building, the growth of the church in numbers was rather slow. Only forty-five were baptized during Mr. Frear's pastorate. A number had been dropped, and some dismissed by letter, so that the membership, in 1875, was but four hundred and fifty-eight, or twenty-eight less than in 1870. But the building of the spiritual temple, like that of the material, was of a sound, substantial and enduring character.

The church lost a number of valuable members by death, during Mr. Frear's pastorate, among them D. J. McVaugh, who was called to his reward after a long illness, borne with Christian resignation and fortitude, in the year 1873. Brother McVaugh was held in high esteem by a large circle of friends, and he was greatly missed in the church and community, where he lived and labored so unselfishly for the cause of his Master. "He was a good man, full of the Holy Ghost and of faith."

Pastor Frear, having expressed his intention to resign the pastorate to accept a call to Lewisburg, a special meeting was convened, when he was requested, by a hearty vote, to reconsider his purpose and remain with the church. But, notwithstanding, his resignation was formally presented on the third of May, 1875, to take effect the first of June.

George Frear, D. D., was born June 21, 1831. He was baptized in 1849, at Eaton, Pa., by his father, Rev. William Frear, who was pastor there for forty

years. He graduated with honors at Lewisburg, now Bucknell University, in 1856, and from the Theological Department in 1858. He was ordained the same year, and became pastor of the First Church of Reading, Pa. While here he was instrumental in organizing the Second Baptist Church of Reading. Dr. Frear was, for a time, during the Civil War, chaplain of the Third Pennsylvania Reserves. In 1872, he accepted the call to Norristown. While here, he received the degree of Doctor of Divinity from Bucknell University. In 1875, he became pastor of the church at Lewisburg, and in 1879 removed to Wilkes-Barre, Pa., where he labored until 1894, when failing health compelled him to retire from active pastoral duties.

In all these important pastorates, Dr. Frear won the hearts of the people to whom he ministered, and will be remembered as an able preacher, a wise builder and a most faithful exponent of the principles of the denomination he served for so many years. Aided by the State Mission Society, Brother Frear reorganized the church at Wilkes-Barre, and established it on a sure foundation. For fourteen years he labored here, building up a strong and prosperous church. He was for eight years trustee of the Keystone Academy and served a number of terms as vice-president of the Education Society. Dr. Frear died at Wilkes-Barre, December 27, 1894.

SIMEON SIEGFRIED

Pastor from September, 1875, to October, 1879.

CHAPTER XV.

Pastorate of Rev. Simeon Siegfried to that Rev. N. B. Randall—September, 1875, to February, 1880.

The church now being without a pastor, Dr. J. K. Weaver, C. H. Detwiler, I. N. Harrar and Malcolm Lindsay were appointed a pulpit committee, and on the second of August, 1875, they reported the name of Rev. Simeon Siegfried for the pastoral office, and on Sunday morning, August fifteenth, he was elected, ninety-nine voting in favor and twenty-three against the call. He entered upon his duties the first of the next month. Mr. Siegfried was nearly fifty years of age, when he came to Norristown, but he was still young in spirit. His work was highly appreciated and he soon became exceedingly popular. He was kind-hearted and liberal by nature, and possessed a commanding presence and rhetorical manner in the pulpit. Personally, he was of a genial disposition. He frequently preached special sermons to the members of the various societies and secret orders, with whom he was a favorite. The audiences grew large and its pastor became popular with the masses.

No special evangelistic effort was undertaken, but a few were baptized at different times during the year.

The Central Union Association met with the church on the sixth of June. Among the strong resolutions passed by that body was one commending the United States commission of the Centennial Exhibition, which was then on in Philadelphia, for refusing to open the doors of the exposition on the Lord's day. They declare "that the opening of the exhibition on the Lord's day would be a falsification of our national history, a misrepresentation of our national morality, an injustice to the multitude of Christian exhibitors and employees, a wrong to the most solemn conviction of the great body of our American Christian people, and would go far to neutralize the Christian teaching of the country respecting the value, use and sacredness of the Lord's day."

In their letter to the association, the Norristown church refer with affection and sympathy to the death of their former pastor, Rev. Hardin Wheat, and ask the prayers of the association for his deeply afflicted family.

Several efforts were made, at this time, to liquidate the church debt, but without entire success. The panic of 1876-7 was keenly felt by many of the members, and the church had difficulty in meeting its current expenses.

The year 1878 was not a very prosperous one, although the congregations continued large. In January, the pastor and deacons made a gloomy report on the spiritual condition, and deprecated the evils of lax discipline. In February, I. N. Harrar was

elected deacon. Mr. Harrar had been prominent in committee work before this time. He also served as trustee for a number of years, and later he was made treasurer of the church. He has always been faithful in his attendance upon the appointed meetings of the church, thus setting a good example in this important, but often neglected duty of church members and officials.

The church manual was again revised, and five hundred copies purchased for distribution. There were many exclusions and erasures, and only two baptisms during the year.

In February, 1879, delegates were appointed to sit in council with the brethren at Royersford to consider the propriety of recognizing them as an independent Baptist church. In the beginning of this year, a rather discouraging report was made by the trustees of the financial condition of the church, in which they say that a long list of members do not contribute anything to the support of the Gospel. In spite of the depressed financial conditions, however, there was considerable interest on the spiritual side. Very profitable meetings were held under the auspices of the Young Peoples' Association, presided over by Mr. C. H. Grigg. There was a number of conversions, and during the year thirty-two were baptized, the largest number any year of Mr. Siegfried's ministry here.

The church was now about to meet its sorest trial and experience its deepest affliction. The pastor started in October to attend the state anniversaries. He had taken a heavy cold and suffered with a severe

chill, immediately on arriving at the convention. He returned home at once. A failure of railroad connections made the journey tedious and disastrous. He reached his home October sixteenth, and immediately summoned his physician, Dr. J. K. Weaver, who found him already beyond the help of medicine. The cold had developed into acute pneumonia. He died on the twentieth of October, 1879, after an illness of only four days. His sudden death produced a profound impression on the entire community. The funeral services were held in the church, and were attended by a great concourse of people. Addresses were delivered by several pastors from Philadelphia. Thousands of persons took a last look at the lamented dead, and all that was mortal of the beloved pastor was conveyed to Newark, New Jersey, for burial. He died in the full and blessed hope he had preached to others, with his eye upon the fadeless wreath, "the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus."

Rev. Simeon Siegfried, Jr., was born at West Chester, Pennsylvania, on the twenty-first of February, 1828. He was one of a race of Baptist ministers. His grandfather, Elder George Siegfried, was one of the early pioneer preachers, who did valuable service in the state of Ohio. His father, Simeon Siegfried, Sr., was at one time a fellow pupil with Samuel Aaron, and won honorable distinction as preacher and editor in Pennsylvania and Ohio. He continued in active labor for more than fifty years.

Simeon Siegfried, Jr., was converted at the age of twelve years, and from that time to the day of his

death he "adorned the doctrines of God his Saviour." He learned the trade of a printer, and much of the time which would otherwise have been spent in school was spent in the printing office. This, with a full course of instruction in the Mount Pleasant Academy, constituted the educational facilities enjoyed by him.

In 1857, he was ordained to the work of the Gospel ministry, in Ohio. He was pastor, successively, at Adamsville and Alexandria, Ohio, at Newark and Trenton, N. J., and Norristown, Pa. He was in love with his work, and hence was successful. He was a Christian whose love for his Divine Master found its most happy expression in earnest, self-denying service. He was a patriot and loved his country well, and his voice and sword were lifted up in defence of his country's honor. He was a man among men, whose warmth of heart won friends and gave him influence and power over his fellows. Busy and cheerful, earnest and hopeful, his presence was always a blessing and an inspiration.

November 9, 1879, the church adopted the following resolutions: "Whereas, God, in his providence, has seen fit to remove from us by death our beloved pastor, Rev. S. Seigfried, Jr.: Therefore, Resolved, That we have lost an earnest, efficient and faithful minister of the Gospel, a champion of every needed reform, a defender of the public morals, a genial companion, a warm-hearted and sympathizing friend. Resolved, That we cherish his memory as a true Christian minister; that we remember and heed his wise counsels, and that we imitate his many virtues."

N. B. RANDALL

Pastor from February, 1880, to September, 1887.

CHAPTER XVI.

Pastorate of Rev. N. B. Randall to that of Rev. C. A. Fulton—February, 1880, to April, 1888.

After the death of Mr. Siegfried, the church soon took steps looking to the settlement of another pastor. On the eighteenth of January, 1880, Rev. N. B. Randall was called, and entered upon his work the fifteenth of the next month. The church now sustained a severe loss by the death of Deacon David Allabough, in the eighty-sixth year of his age. He was a man highly esteemed, a valuable officer, and of irreproachable character. Among other valuable members, who died during the year, were Mrs. Thos. D. Abraham, John Tustin and Henry Still. A deep spiritual interest prevailed during the year, and about forty persons were added to the church by baptism.

In 1881, the church made another heroic effort to cancel the church debt of about five thousand dollars. This amount was divided into shares of ten dollars each. the entire amount was soon subscribed and subsequently paid.

During this year the church lost another deacon by death in the person of Thomas Scattergood. He was a faithful servant of the Lord, and, like Deacon Allabough, died at the good old age of eighty-six.

His devout Christian life continues to bear fruit to the praise and the glory of his name. There were now two vacancies in the board of deacons, and Joseph E. Rapp and Walter L. Butz were chosen to fill the places.

Mr. Rapp was a good man and much devoted to his church, being active both in the spiritual and temporal affairs, he was well suited to the high office. He afterwards became the superintendent of the West Side Mission Sunday School, and, when that interest developed into the Second Baptist Church, Mr. Rapp became an important officer and pillar there.

Mr. Butz, although a young man, had manifested much interest and devotion to the church and had been a useful member. He subsequently united with the Second Church of Norristown, also.

Thirty-five were added this year by baptism.

On the twenty-fifth of April, 1882, C. H. Detwiler died suddenly at his home. Mr. Detwiler was a very useful man in the church. Hardly any one could have been missed more at this time. He was deacon, church clerk and Sunday school superintendent, and had served faithfully and efficiently in all these offices, as well as on many important committees. The large attendance at his funeral, which was held in the church, was an evidence of the high esteem in which he had been held.

On the fourteenth of May, 1882, J. K. Weaver, M. D., was elected superintendent of the school. This was an excellent choice. Dr. Weaver proved a wise and efficient leader. His management of the

school was ever in accordance with the most approved methods. He exercised great care in the selection of teachers. As a rule, only those who were students of the Word and "apt to teach" were assigned to this important work. The men and women whom he gathered about him were among the most reliable and earnest workers in the church.

Among the many noble men who have served this church, Dr. Weaver will be remembered as one of the most capable, progressive and broad-minded leaders, who gave himself with disinterested fidelity to its highest interest. Although well known throughout the state, through his connection with various educational and missionary boards of the denomination, of which he has been a valued member, his deepest interest has always centered in the Bible school work of his own church. Greatly interested in mission schools, he took the initiative step in the establishing of the mission on the West Side, out of which has grown the Second Baptist Church, and, in 1890, he recommended the organization of the school in the East End. Ever loyal to his pastors, Dr. Weaver has been held in high esteem by them, as a wise and trusted counselor, a genial and generous hearted companion.

A series of resolutions was adopted at this time, on the death of Deacon Detwiler, in which they speak of his inestimable services to the church and Sunday school, and in which they deplore his death, while in the prime of his manhood.

R. N. Wood, who was about to remove to England, resigned as church collector, and R. K. Fulmer was elected to fill the place.

At the June meeting, Theo. Knabb was elected church clerk. Mr. Knabb became a prompt, careful and competent official, being well adapted to the duties of this important position.

December 12, 1882, being the fiftieth anniversary of the organization of the church, the event was appropriately celebrated by a series of services. Among those who participated in these semi-centennal exercises, were Hiram Hutchins, D. D., of Brooklyn, pastor of the church from 1847 to 1850; Geo. Frear, D. D., pastor from 1872 to 1875; Rev. W. E. Cornwell and Rev. T. J. Siegfried, sons of ex-pastors. Letters were also read from other former pastors.

This was a fruitful year, spiritually; fifty-two were added by baptism.

The year 1883 was uneventful, but one of quiet work, and twelve were baptized. Thirteen were received by letter.

February 4, 1884, M. H. McVaugh was elected deacon to fill the vacancy caused by the death of C. H. Detwiler. Mr. McVaugh was fifty-seven years of age, when he was chosen deacon, and had been for years a faithful and devout man of God. Assuredly, in this choice, the church observed the Scriptural injunction, "and let these also first be proved."

This was not a year of fruitage in soul winning, only four persons being received by baptism, but ten were added by letter.

This church has all along its history taken a deep interest in the important work of establishing and maintaining mission Sabbath schools. At this time, Dr. Weaver, the superintendent of the main school, urged the opening of a mission in West Norristown ; accordingly, at the January business meeting, in 1885, the first decisive steps were taken in this direction. The following resolutions were adopted : "That we make an effort to establish a mission Sunday school in West Norristown, and that a committee be appointed for that purpose." Jos. E. Rapp, Jas. A. Hurst, Harry Cassel, Augustus Hart, Dr. J. K. Weaver and T. C. Davis were appointed that committee. At the March meeting, this committee reported that a site for the building of a chapel could be secured on George Street, between Marshall and Airy, for one thousand and six hundred dollars, and it was agreed to make the purchase. At a special meeting, held on the eighteenth of March, it was decided to abandon the effort to purchase lots on George Street, as lots could be secured at the north west corner of Marshall Street and Haws Avenue, better adapted to the purpose. The committee was then instructed to purchase these lots, on which there was a building suitable for mission purposes, at a cost of three thousand and two hundred dollars. It was fortunate indeed that this change of purpose was made, as the property on Haws Avenue is one of the most beautiful and centrally located sites for a church in that vicinity.

January 1, 1885, the church selected the following persons as officers and teachers for the proposed mission school : Superintendent and treasurer, Jos.

E. Rapp; assistant superintendent, Jas. A. Hurst; chorister, Harry Cassel; organist, Miss Walker; secretary, James Harley; librarians, Edward Kellar, H. F. Reifsnyder and Wm. Burton; teachers, T. C. Davis, Jas. A. Hurst, Mrs. Hurst, Harry Cassel, Mrs. Reed, Mrs. Jos. Kohl, Mrs. Phillips, Miss Hannah Rapp and Miss Annie McVaugh. The school was opened June 21, 1885, with sixty-six scholars. In the home school, at this time, there were fifty-one officers and teachers, and five hundred and thirty scholars.

The Central Union Association held its fifty-third anniversary with the Norristown Church, this year. One hundred and forty delegates were present. Among the important measures adopted was a vigorous resolution on the prohibition of the liquor traffic. There were one hundred baptisms reported, and twenty-three thousand eight hundred and seventy-eight dollars, the total contributions.

In September, Dr. J. K. Weaver, on behalf of the Social Union, offered the following resolution, which was adopted: "That the church approve of the efforts of the Social Union to secure sufficient money to purchase a pipe organ for the main audience room." The Social Union made another progressive move in organizing a singing class among the young people, in order to awaken an interest in music. At this same time a committee, consisting of Thos. Sames, Harry Cassel, P. Y. Eisenberg and Jos. Roberts, recommended the adoption of the Baptist Hymnal. The recommendation was heartily approved, and this most excellent selection was adopted as the hymn book of the church.

On the fifteenth of October, the building which had been fitted up for the mission school on Haws Avenue was dedicated with appropriate exercises.

During the spring of 1886, Pastor Randall was assisted in special service by Rev. Chas. H. Thomas and Wayland Hoyt, D. D. The afternoon Bible meetings of Dr. Hoyt were very instructive and inspiring, and were largely attended.

During the spring of 1887, the church united with other churches of the town in a series of union meetings, conducted by Evangelist Geo. C. Needham. These meetings were well attended and great good was done, although they did not prove particularly productive in immediate conversions.

On the fourth of April, Dr. P. Y. Eisenberg tendered his resignation as chorister. It was accepted, and the following commendatory resolution was adopted : "That Dr. P. Y. Eisenberg, who has acted in the capacity of chorister for the last fifteen years, having resigned his position, the church hereby express their confidence in his ability as a leader, and their appreciation of the patience and fidelity with which he has discharged his duty." A committee on chorister was appointed, and soon after reported Lafayette Ross as willing to take the position temporarily, and he was accordingly engaged.

At this time Deacon Rapp, on behalf of the workers at the mission in the West End, asked the advice of the church in regard to the organization of an independent church. A committee, consisting of Thos. Sames, Jos. E. Rapp, Jas. A. Hurst, M. H.

McVaugh and Dr. J. K. Weaver, was appointed to consider the request, report the number likely to join the new church and the advisability of the matter, and a plan for its accomplishment, in case it is approved by the church. On the second of May, 1887, a majority of the committee reported in favor of the project. This report was accepted, and the trustees were instructed to deed to the new church the mission property, with its encumbrances, as soon as the organization could be effected.

On the twelfth day of May, letters were granted to forty-five members to form an independent Baptist church. June second, a meeting was held at the mission, and an organization effected, under the name of the Second Baptist Church of Norristown. The usual articles of faith were adopted, and seven trustees and five deacons were elected. A council of Baptist churches was called to meet on the sixteenth of June, 1887, and, after considering the usual documents and evidences, voted unanimously to recognize the new organization as a regular Baptist church. The new enterprise was launched auspiciously, and rapidly grew into a vigorous church. Being situated in a residential and rapidly growing section of the town, the Sunday school and the church both grew apace. In September, 1887, they called as their first pastor, Rev. W. E. Staub. During his ministry a new stone chapel was built, at a cost of six thousand dollars. Mr. Staub was succeeded by Rev. J. G. Dyer. He resigned in 1892, when Rev. J. H. Haslam became pastor. During each of these pastorates the Second

Baptist Church has made strong and substantial progress.

At this time several efforts were made to have the deacons elected for a term of years, instead of for life. As there were some vacancies in the board, elections were held for the purpose of filling them, and in July, R. N. Wood was chosen. Mr. Wood was constant in his church attendance and prompt in the discharge of his official duties, while Mrs. Wood was well qualified for the exacting duties of a deacon's wife. In visiting the sick and ministering to the needy her services were much appreciated.

On the first of August, 1887, Pastor Randall, in accordance with his announcement in May, tendered his resignation, to take effect the first of September. The resignation was accepted, and the following resolutions adopted : "That the thanks of the church are due Rev. N. B. Randall for the work he did while pastor, in assisting materially in cancelling the debt ; in his untiring devotion to the Master ; in his visits to the sick ; in his efforts to promote the various reforms of the day; but above all, in his clear expositions of the Scriptures."

Mr. Randall was a strong preacher and a faithful pastor ; a suggestive and inspiring teacher. Of industrious habits, his mind was ever employed in planning for the advancement of the church. During his pastorate he edited, for a few years, a small paper, entitled "The Norristown Baptist," afterwards "The Central Union Baptist." In this he published an historical sketch of the Norristown Church. This

must have cost him much labor, and was in some respects an invaluable work, particularly in the gathering and collating of interesting incidents and important data.

Mr. Randall was with the church seven years and six months, making the longest pastorate in its history. During this time he baptized one hundred and ninety-two converts. Many of these soon became very strong and prominent Christians, taking an active part in every good work. The membership at the close of this pastorate, after dismissing fifty-one to form the Second Baptist Church, was five hundred and forty-three.

Mr. Randall was blessed with a faithful and consecrated wife, whom God richly endowed with many rare gifts, and who was, therefore, fully competent and ever ready to second all his toils.

The interval between the pastorate of Mr. Randall and that of his successor was marked by frequent business meetings, which were not always characterized by that degree of harmony and humility of spirit which should prevail among God's people. Yet at no time was there any serious difficulty, or any wrong that might not have been amicably righted by the exercise of good judgment and mutual forbearance, and an earnest appeal to the Good Shepherd to guide his own sheep into the right way, and to preserve the fold in peace.

CHARLES A. FULTON

Pastor from April, 1888, to February, 1891.

CHAPTER XVII.

Pastorate of Rev. C. A. Fulton to that of Rev. W. C. Richmond—April, 1888, to November, 1891.

March 19, 1888, Rev. C. A. Fulton, of Camden, S. C., was chosen pastor by a large and nearly unanimous vote. He came on the field at once, and began his labors on the first of April, the installation services being held on the twenty-fourth. On this occasion, Dr. J. B. Gough Pidge preached the sermon, and Rev. J. L. Litch, pastor of the Central Presbyterian Church, delivered the address of welcome. Rev. William E. Staub, J. G. Walker, D.D., and David Spencer, D.D., were also present and participated in the services.

On the twenty-seventh of May, delegates were chosen to sit in council with the Lower Providence Church, for the ordination of Deacon S. O. Perry to the work of the Gospel ministry.

During the year 1888, the Social Union completed the work, on which they had been engaged for several years, of purchasing a pipe organ for the auditorium. The organ was placed in the church in March, 1889, and the grand opening was held on the ninth of that month. The house was filled with an appreciative audience, and the keys of the grand organ were tested by a number of distinguished performers, among

them Prof. David D. Wood, Mr. Elwood Beaver, Mrs. K. B. Jacoby and Miss Annie L. Cressman. This magnificent instrument was purchased of William King & Sons, Elmira, New York, at a cost of $3000. It has one thousand three hundred and ten pipes, sixty-one notes on manual and thirty notes on pedal. It has ten stops in great manual, nine stops in swell manual and eleven mechanical stops, and is propelled by a patent water-motor. At the same time the church building was renovated at a cost of two thousand, four hundred dollars.

In their Associational letter, the church reported improved spiritual interests, and an addition by baptism of thirty-two. This was the largest number of baptisms in a year since 1882.

In April, Henry F. Scatchard was chosen deacon. Mr. Scatchard, together with his wife and daughter, had been received by letter from the Second Church, Germantown, a short time before, where they had been useful and highly esteemed members. There Mr. Scatchard had been deacon and trustee. His coming into the Norristown Church and his election to the office of deacon, just at this time, were exceedingly fortunate. Being an experienced business man, of excellent practical judgment, a devout and consecrated Christian and a liberal giver, Mr. Scatchard became at once a most valuable and influential member. Gifted in prayer and testimony, and possessing a sweet Christian spirit, few men have rounded out more fully the New Testament requirement for the office of deacon, to be "full of wisdom

and the Holy Ghost." He was greatly esteemed by his pastors as a kind, wise and agreeable fellow worker.

In May, Lafayette Ross tendered his resignation as leader of the choir, and the next month S. H. Wright was elected to the position.

During this year the young people of the church, led by Pastor Fulton, took an advance step in the organization of a Christian Endeavor Society, in accordance with the plans as promulgated by Francis E. Clark, D. D. This society was a much needed auxiliary to the church. Their regular prayer meetings on Wednesday evenings were well attended, and stimulated general activity on the part of the young members of the church in many good works.

On the seventeenth of June, 1889, J. K. Weaver, M. D., was elected deacon of the church. Dr. Weaver had been superintendent of the Sunday school for seven years, and a member of the board of trustees for a number of terms. In these offices and on many important committees, he had evinced a marked faithfulness and efficiency as a leader. His practical knowledge of progressive methods of church work and the deep spirituality of his life made him well qualified for the high office of deacon.

September second, the church voted to grant a license to preach to T. C. Davis. This same month it was decided to unite with the other congregations of the town in a series of meetings, to continue four weeks, conducted by Evangelist W. L. Munhall. These meetings were very largely attended, and

resulted in a large number of conversions. A good proportion of these united with the Baptist church.

During this year, Deacon George Wright requested the church to relieve him from the office of deacon, which he had held so long. He was thereupon appointed deacon emeritus. Mr. Wright had been a prominent member and an active worker in the church for many years. He was a great admirer of Rev. Samuel Aaron, and during the days of slavery was known as one of Mr. Aaron's most trusted lieutenants in the transportation of slaves to Canada.

In the spring of 1890, Dr. J. K. Weaver suggested the importance of establishing another mission school, this time in East Norristown, and in February, Dr. Weaver, Deacon Scatchard and Deacon Harrar were appointed a committee, to consider the matter and report to the church. In March, they recommended the opening of a school in the Sandy Street school building, permission having been granted by the school board; that Deacon Scatchard be appointed as superintendent, and that the church appropriate twenty-five dollars for literature. The school was accordingly opened in March, 1890, with fifty-eight scholars; H. F. Scatchard, superintendent.

A great improvement was now made in the lecture room of the church by replacing the pews with chairs, and otherwise remodeling it and the infant and intermediate class-rooms.

In their associational letter, this year, the church gives a most flattering account of their work. Sixty-seven had been baptized. The membership was now

six hundred and two, and there had been a substantial increase in their benevolent contributions. This last was secured by adopting a system whereby an offering was solicited from every member.

In September, S. H. Wright resigned the position of chorister, and the same month Wilmer M. Bean was appointed to succeed him. In October, the state anniversaries were held with the church. There was a large attendance, and two hundred and eighty-four delegates were entertained.

In February, Pastor Fulton resigned the pastoral office to accept a call to Baltimore. Mr. Fulton was pastor two years and ten months. During this time, one hundred were added to the church by baptism, and many important improvements effected. He was a pleasing and attractive speaker, a cordial friend and a genial companion. During much of his time here he was burdened with deep sorrow for the loss by death of loved ones, and thus, providentially, unfitted often for pastoral duties, yet, in the midst of his afflictions and bereavements, he was of a cheerful spirit, and bore all with marked Christian fortitude.

Mr. Fulton took his collegiate and theological course at Madison (Colgate) University. His first church was at Camden, S. C., whence he came to Norristown, which was his second pastorate. Fitting resolutions were adopted by the church, in which they state "that we deeply regret the severance of the pastoral relation and the removal from our midst of so able, earnest and devoted an under-shepherd; one who has developed the spiritual strength of the

young; always been valiant in defense of the truth; clear and concise in expounding the Scriptures, and in declaring the whole counsel of God."

Mr. Fulton preached his last sermon on the eighth of February, 1891, to one of the largest audiences which had ever assembled in the church.

W. C. RICHMOND

Pastor from November, 1891, to June, 1893.

CHAPTER XVIII.

Pastorate of Rev. W. C. Richmond to that of Rev. Alonzo A. DeLarme—November, 1891, to November, 1893.

It is an evidence of the united and harmonious condition of the church, upon the departure of the Rev. Mr. Fulton, that two months after, the church, by an almost unanimous vote, extended an invitation to Rev. J. H. Parshley, of Philadelphia, to become their pastor. This call was not accepted, and on the ninth of November, 1891, the pulpit committee recommended Rev. W. C. Richmond, of Massachusetts. He was accordingly called, and entered upon the field at once. The public installation was held on the twenty-first of December. W. T. Chase, D. D., preached the sermon, and Rev. F. S. Dobbins, T. R. Beeber, D. D., Rev. C. A. Soars and Rev. J. G. Dyer also participated in the services.

Mr. Richmond was educated at Oberlin College and Rochester Theological Seminary, and had been pastor of several churches in New England. He was an earnest man and endeavored to accomplish a good work, but his pastorate here was not altogether satistory, either to himself or to the church. He labored under many disadvantages and trying circumstances, which greatly hindered the progress and prosperity of

the cause he desired to enhance. He continued his labors, however, until the first of June, 1892. During his ministry of one year and six months, thirty-six persons were added to the church by baptism, and fifteen by letter.

On the fourteenth of June, the church sent delegates to the Second Baptist Church of Norristown for the ordination of Rev. J. H. Haslam, who had been called as their pastor.

During the interim of pastors the pulpit was filled as usual by supplies.

At this time several attempts were made to fill two vacancies on the Board of Deacons, and finally Dr. Horace Still was chosen as one. Dr. Still had served acceptably, for a number of terms, on the Board of Trustees, but was best known as the church's competent and popular organist.

A. A. DeLarme

Present Pastor

CHAPTER XIX.

Pastorate of Rev. Alonzo A. DeLarme.

September 3, 1893, Rev. Alonzo A. DeLarme, of New Haven, Connecticut, was called to the pastorate, and entered upon his duties Sunday, November twelfth. The installation services were held the following Thursday. The sermon, on this occasion, was preached by E. H. Johnson, D. D., of Crozer Seminary. Mr. DeLarme, a native of Pennsylvania, taught school for a few years in Clearfield County. He prepared for college at Mt. Pleasant Institute, and graduated from the State University of Indiana in 1887, and from the Crozer Theological Seminary in 1890. He became pastor of Hope Church, New Haven, Conn., immediately after graduation from Crozer, and was ordained in that city July 17, 1890. He remained pastor there until he resigned to accept the call to the First Baptist Church of Norristown. The church numbered five hundred and sixty-four members, but was not thoroughly organized, and there was considerable discord and dissension in various parts of the congregation. But the new pastor believed he had been divinely summoned to this field and determined, in the strength of Him who had called him, to labor

faithfully and persistently for the glory of God and the salvation of souls. He had the hearty co-operation of many at the beginning, and very soon of the whole body. By a systematic and diligent house to house visitation, harmony and good will were soon restored and made strong factors in the upbuilding of the whole church. Existing auxiliary organizations were revived and new ones formed. The week of prayer was followed by meetings every evening for several weeks, which resulted in many conversions, with baptisms every Sunday for nearly three months.

On the fifth of March, 1894, Thomas Sames was elected deacon. He was one of the youngest elected to that office, but was well qualified by faithful service and spiritual fervor for the performance of its duties. Active in the prayer meeting and all devotional services, and blessed with a wife zealous and capable as a leader in Christian work, Mr. Sames became a most useful and valuable official.

Early in 1895, the pastor called a joint meeting of the deacons and trustees to consider the advisability of erecting a chapel for the use of the Mission, in the east end of the town. On the sixth of May a recommendation was made to the church, advising the erection of the chapel. A plan of the proposed building accompanied the recommendation. After considerable discussion, the measure was unanimously adopted. A building committee was then appointed, consisting of Deacon H. F. Scatchard, Dr. J. K. Weaver, Charles Pennypacker, Thomas Sames and Edwin W. Levering. A large subscription committee

was also appointed. This committee worked zealously, and soon succeeded in securing a subscription nearly sufficient to meet the expenses of the building.

This much needed chapel was made a possibility, at this time, by the noble generosity of Mrs. Ellen M. White, who contributed one thousand eight hundred dollars for the purchase of desirable lots, beautifully situated at the southeast corner of Marshall and Violet Streets. Edwin F. Bertolett, a competent and successful architect, and fortunately a member of the church, furnished, without cost to the congregation, the designs and specifications of the new building, and, during the course of its structure, gave much valuable advice. Work was commenced at once, and the corner stone was laid September seventh, at which time addresses were made by Elder William McDermott, of the Presbyterian church, Rev. J. H. Haslam, of the Second Baptist, and Rev. A. T Steward, of the Bridgeport Baptist, and the pastor.

The building committee now pushed the work along as rapidly as could be done, through the winter, and by spring the pretty chapel was ready for occupancy. The dedication occurred on Thursday, the twenty-sixth of March. Interesting services were held in the afternoon and evening, presided over by Pastor DeLarme. Rev. John Love preached the sermon, and there were addresses by Deacon H. F. Scatchard and the pastors of the local churches. Special music for the occasion was furnished by the choir of the First Church.

MISSION CHAPEL

The entire cost of the chapel, including ground, was ten thousand dollars. The structure is built of rough blue stone. It is "T" shaped, and is seventy feet on Violet Street and fifty feet on Marshall Street. The auditorium is fifty feet square, contains a large gallery and will seat three hundred and fifty persons. The basement is designed for the infant and intermediate departments of the Sunday school. The whole building is well adapted to Sunday school purposes, and is one of the prettiest and neatest church edifices in the town. It is a credit to the denomination, and marks another progressive step in the history of the First Baptist Church. The congregation, generally, responded liberally to the appeal made for this enterprise. The trustees in office, at this time, were Thomas Sames, Benjamin F. Woodland, Chas. Pennypacker, Dr. Horace Still, R. N. Wood, Theo. Knabb and Horace H. Johnson.

The Bible School, the prayer meetings, the Mite Society and other organizations of the Mission hold their regular services here. There has been preaching every Sunday evening. W. C. Myers, secretary of the local Y. M. C. A., and a licentiate of the First Church, preached acceptably for the first year. The pastor also preached at stated times on week-day evenings.

With these better and increased facilities the mission grew rapidly in numbers, until over two hundred scholars and teachers were enrolled. Under the leadership of an earnest superintendent, surrounded by a loyal band of workers, this mission became one of the vigorous branches of the church,

instrumental in the salvation of not a few precious souls for the Master.

The year 1896 was marked by another advance step, in the way of lighting the church by electricity. The Social Union placed an electrical chandelier in the auditorium, at a cost of three hundred and thirty dollars.

In May, the Central Union Association held its sixty-fourth anniversary in Norristown. More than two hundred and fifty delegates were entertained, and all the sessions were largely and enthusiastically attended.

In June, 1896, Pastor DeLarme was granted a vacation of two months for a visit to Europe. He sailed on July first and returned September twelfth, having been away ten Sundays.

Preceding and during the week of prayer, a gracious revival began, both in the church and at the mission, resulting in a good number of conversions at both places. Evangelist G. R. Cairns was then invited to assist the pastor. He remained two weeks. The church worked heartily and prayerfully with him, and the Lord blessed their united labors in a large ingathering of souls.

In April, a council was called to consider the propriety of ordaining J. R. Wood to the work of the Gospel ministry. The council met June 10, 1897, and, after a thorough examination, voted unanimously and heartily for his ordination. The ordination sermon was preached by Henry G. Weston, D.D., president of Crozer Seminary, and the ordaining prayer was

offered by Pastor DeLarme. N. B. Randall, D. D., and Geo. W. Folwell, D. D., also participated in the services.

The next week the church sent delegates to meet with the Lower Providence Church, on June sixteenth, for the ordination of Theodore Heysham.

Early in the year 1897, Mr. DeLarme began the preparation of this history. Carried on in connection with the exacting duties of the pastoral office, and in the midst of many interruptions, it proved an onerous and difficult task. The work was given to the publisher in July.

During this pastorate of nearly four years to date, one hundred and seventy-six persons have been baptized. Many of these have proved valiant and helpful laborers in the vineyard of the Lord.

Among the valuable members received by letter were Miss M. A. Heydrick, a consecrated Christian and liberal giver; W. C. Myers, who rendered excellent service at the East End Mission; and Rev. and Mrs. C. F. Williams, whose presence was always a cheering inspiration; and others equally useful.

The membership of six hundred and eighty, the largest in the history of the church, includes many very earnest and efficient Christian workers, loyal to their pastor, faithful and devoted to the highest interests of the church. To these is due very largely the success and prosperity of this period, marked by the uniformly large congregations at the Sunday and mid-week services, the continued high spiritual condition of the church, with conversions almost every

month, and baptisms every week for a portion of each year ; enlarged contributions to the benevolent objects of the denomination ; increased sociability among the members ; the attachment to the church of a large body of young people ; and the aggressive work of the Bible School, Ladies' Missionary Society and other auxiliary departments.

The new organizations formed during this pastorate were the "Young Men's League ;" the "Whatsoever" and "Jewel Seekers" circles of King's Daughters, and the Junior Endeavor Society, each of which has done good work in its own particular line. Mention must also be made of the efficiency, at this time, of the large and well trained volunteer choir, and the corps of tactful ushers.

The history of our Church has thus been traced from its beginning to the present time (1897), a period of sixty-five years. During these years, thirteen hundred and sixty-five have been baptized into the fellowship of the church, and six hundred and fifty-six have been received by letter, and many more here found Christ as a personal Saviour. To many, this place has been the very gate of Heaven. How many have left heavy burdens and many found inspiration for the trials of life. Tender memories, both of the living and the dead, gather about this dear old home. It has been, for nearly three quarters of a century, a potent factor in the propagation of Christianity in the community, and a conspicuous example of the power

of a church, indwelt by the Holy Spirit, to elevate men and redeem society. True, mistakes have been made, and the mind of the Divine Master has not always been exemplified, nor the Spirit's leading always followed. Yet mistakes have not been made willfully. The heart of the Church has been right and its purpose true and steadfast. The influence for good has been widely extended and it has left its blessings upon unnumbered souls. From the pulpit of this Church the full Gospel of Christ's salvation has been preached in demonstration of the Spirit and power, and the lofty principles of national virtue have been proclaimed with no uncertain sound. Here some of the noblest men and women who ever labored in the Church militant have toiled and prayed and mingled in earnest worship. Who can tell how many this church of ours will find, among the blessed, to honor and cherish her forever, when this life is over and the Church militant has become the church triumphant? The past has taught its lesson; the present has its duty; and the future its hope.

APPENDIX.

The outline sketches of the auxiliary organizations, which are here appended, have been furnished mainly by the following persons: Miss Mary J. Perry, Miss Mary E. Cauffman, Mrs. R. F. Hoffecker, Mrs. Ambrose Dettre and Miss Arvilla Hart.

THE BIBLE SCHOOL.

The Bible School of the First Baptist Church was organized a few months prior to the constitution of the church, in 1832. Phinehas Phillips, Samuel D. Phillips, Geo. Eve and B. F. Hancock, Esq., were chiefly instrumental in its organization. The school held its sessions, at first, in the house of Mrs. Grosscup, corner of Main and Green Streets, and later in the school building, Cherry and Airy Streets. The first superintendent was B. F. Hancock, Esq., and the teachers were George Eve, Mrs. Hancock, the Misses Grosscup and Miss Mary Bolton. Each scholar who could read was expected to commit to memory, each week, a portion of God's Word and recite it to the teacher. Blue tickets with a verse of Scripture were given to the scholars, according to the number of verses committed, and six blue tickets were exchanged for a red one. It is said that some of the scholars in that little school sometimes committed a whole chapter in a week, and also a hymn from their hymn book. A printed certificate was given by the superintendent to each scholar who had complied with the rules and attended the school for one year. A form of certificate used was as follows: "John Anderson, having complied with the rules of admission to the Sunday School attached to the Baptist Church of Norristown, is this day enrolled as a member thereof, and is henceforth entitled to all its privileges. May God guide and keep him, and bless the instruction he may receive to the everlasting good of his soul. (Signed) B. F. Hancock, Supt."

At a business meeting of the church, in 1837, it was resolved that the church take the Sunday school under its supervision. The average attendance of the school, at this time, was about seventy-five or eighty. In 1849, seventeen years after the school was organized, the number of scholars was two hundred and sixty-two, and the number of officers and teachers twenty-six, The expense of the school for the year was forty-four dollars. Mr. Hancock remained superintendent for twenty years, when he withdrew from the church, and subsequently became superintendent of the Bridgeport School. He was succeeded by George Wright, who served in this capacity for eight years.

From 1860 to 1862, the office of the superintendent was held by three different persons, D. R. McDermond, John Rees and Rev. Alfred Pinney. After this, D. J. McVaugh was chosen superintendent and filled the office until failing health compelled him to resign, in 1869.

A musical instrument was placed in the school at this time. During this year, Deacon N. B. Johnson was elected superintendent and served until 1874. It was during Mr. Johnson's superintendency that the International Lessons were adopted. The intermediate department was formed in 1878. Miss Lizzie Clark was its first superintendent, and upon her resignation Miss Linnie Mills, now Mrs. Thomas Sames, was chosen.

Deacon Christian H. Detwiler became superintendent in 1874 and served until his death in 1882. He was succeeded by J. K. Weaver, M. D. Dr. Weaver proved a most efficient leader; prompt and constant in his attendance, he inspired like virtues in the teachers and scholars. A diligent student of the Bible himself, he was ever careful to select teachers who were students of the Word. The teaching, therefore, has been eminently practical and efficient.

The first superintendent of the infant department was Mrs. B. F. Hancock. Other teachers have been Deacon C. H. Detwiler, Mrs. R. F. Hoffecker, Miss Sarah E. Fry, Miss Irene Clark and Mrs. Lafayette Ross. Deacon Detwiler had charge of the infant department about eight years, or until 1874, when he was elected superintendent of the main school.

In 1885, the mission school in West Norristown was organized, out of which has grown the Second Baptist Church. In 1890, another mission was started in East Norristown, with Deacon Henry F. Scatchard as superintendent. This school held its sessions for six years in the Sandy Street Public School building. Then the church built a beautiful and commodious chapel for its mission, at Marshall and Violet Streets. With the improved facilities, which this chapel afforded, the school has greatly increased in numbers and influence.

The singing of the school has long been a very attractive feature. Lafayette Ross, the musical director, has manifested much patience and skill in his untiring efforts to make this important part of the work effective. Miss Jennie Roberts has been faithful as pianist, a position for which she is well qualified.

In the spring of 1897, a new department was formed, called the Junior Department, under the superintendency of Miss Irene Clark.

The aim, kept steadily in view, has been the conversion of the scholars, consequently a good number of converts from the school is reported each year.

The present officers of the school are Dr. J. K. Weaver, superintendent; I. N. Harrar, assistant superintendent, R. N. Wood, Horatio Seltzer and C. Augustus Evans, librarians; Lewis A. Irons, George McGlathery and E. N. Harrar, secretaries.

The following are the present teachers: Miss Mary A. Rees, Mrs. R. N. Wood, Miss Mary J. Perry, Mr. Thomas Sames, Mr. Lafayette Ross, Mr. Charles Anselm, Miss Mary Cauffman, Miss Laura Cauffman, Mrs. John Kennedy, Miss Arvilla Hart, Mrs. Ambrose Dettre, Miss Mary A. McVaugh, Miss Jennie Jarrett, Mrs. Mary Bean, Miss Josephine Tyson, Miss Ida M. Davis, Miss Katharine Detwiler, Miss Bessie Ward, Miss Sue Doan, Miss Emma Edwards, Miss Florence Harrar, Miss Jennie Roberts.

Junior department: Miss Irene Clark, superintendent; Miss Edna Schrack, assistant.

Intermediate department: Mrs. Thomas Sames, superintendent; Miss Laura McVaugh, Miss Mary Hallman and Miss Eva Wagner, assistants.

Infant department: Mrs. Lafayette Ross, superintendent; Miss Adele Glenn, Mrs. Elroy Williams, Miss Esther Thomas, assistants.

Mission schools have been maintained, at different times, in outlying districts, by members of the church. Henry Still, for a number of years, conducted such a school at Penn Square. Thomas D. Abraham has been the faithful superintendent of a school at Upper Merion, and William E. Phillips of that at King-of-Prussia.

THE SOCIAL UNION.

This organization had its origin in a concentrated effort to raise means for the furnishing of the new church edifice, built in 1873. The honor of first suggesting a Mite Society, afterwards called the Social Union, belongs to Mr. John E. Overholtzer and Miss Mary Spang.

A meeting was held at the house of Mr. Sam'l Overholtzer, November 26, 1872, when the society was organized. A committee, consisting of John Overholtzer, R. G. Sheppard and Miss Lizzie Clark, was appointed to draft a constitution and by-laws for the future government of the society. The preamble is as follows: "We, the undersigned, having in view the furnishing of the new church, as well as the cultivation of sociability among ourselves, do organize and associate for the furtherance of the above objects."

On December 3, 1872, a permanent organization was effected, with Miss M. Hallowell, (Mrs. Hurst,) as president; Miss Lizzie Clarke, (Mrs. Chas. James,) as secretary, and Mrs. R. G. Sheppard, treasurer. The monthly dues were fixed at ten cents per member, and a box for voluntary offerings was decided upon. The amount collected was three dollars and ten cents. A committee was appointed to canvass the church for new members, and at each meeting additions were reported. Everyone seemed determined to make the society a success. All went to work vigorously, and at the fourth meeting it was decided to give an entertainment in the old church, just before demolishing it, in the form of a reunion and supper of the entire membership and friends. This

reunion was given on March 27, 1873. It was a grand success and realized four hundred and forty-seven dollars and twenty cents.

At the April meeting, it was decided the society should elect one trustee to take charge of and invest the money belonging to them, which now amounted to five hundred and fifty-eight dollars and sixteen cents. Deacon Detwiler was elected. At the end of the first year, the handsome sum of one thousand and nine dollars and seventy-seven cents had been raised by hard work.

On August 4, 1874, a church-furnishing committee was appointed, one-half to be named by the church and one-half by the society. The entire committee worked earnestly, and by November had the entire church furnished. Before the dedication of the new church, which occured on November 15, 1874, the society had paid one thousand nine hundred and fourteen dollars and ninety-four cents for all furniture, and held a special meeting, November 10, 1874, at which it was decided to obligate itself for one thousand dollars in liquidating the church debt. All labored cheerfully for this new object.

For the year 1875, the treasurer reported money raised, eight hundred and ninety-two dollars and fifty-seven cents. By June, 1876, the one thousand dollars was paid, and a new obligation assumed, namely, to pay four hundred dollars of the eight hundred dollars borrowed from the cemetery fund by the church.

At the June meeting, 1877, the committee in charge reported the cancelling of this obligation, and now the society, after much deliberation, agreed to raise one thousand dollars on a mortgage against the church.

By January, 1880, the society had again in the treasury, five hundred and seventy-nine dollars and fifty-seven cents.

On May 4, 1880, it was decided, at a regular meeting, that the Mite Society raise five hundred dollars towards the payment of the three thousand dollars mortgage held against the church, to be paid one year from date. Also a new carpet for parlor, purchased at a cost of sixty-seven dollars and ninety cents. A receipt was received for the five hundred dollars by February, 1882, and one hundred dollars additional promised.

In September, 1882, Dr. Weaver, from the committee on objects of work, proposed two, church repairs and a pipe organ. At the November meeting, it was decided to work for a pipe organ.

On December 9, 1884, the Mite Society's name was changed to the Social Union. Work went bravely on, and festivals, excursions and concerts were given to swell receipts, until December 2, 1886, when a committee, consisting of Mr. Ross, Drs. Still and Weaver, was appointed to purchase the new organ, and June 4, 1891, in the presence of a large audience assembled in the auditorium of the church, the president, Mr. Ross, presented the beautiful organ to the church. It cost three thousand dollars, and was paid in full by the society. Dr. Weaver, president of the board of trustees, accepted the gift on behalf of the church.

September 30, 1892, a special meeting of the Social Union was held, at which it was decided to buy a piano, at a cost of two hundred and thirteen dollars. There being no special object for which to work, the society accomplished nothing for about a year, when a meeting was held, at which it was decided to remit all back dues of members; also, to reduce monthly dues to five cents. All former members were urged again to interest themselves and to secure new members.

In June, 1894, the society granted an order for six dollars and ninety-six cents, as half payment for china-closet for dishes of missionary circle.

The last work done to date, by this society, was putting up an electric chandelier and other lights in the church, at a cost of three hundred and thirty dollars.

Summary of money raised:

$1914.94	Church furnishing.
1000.00	At dedication on debt.
1000.00	On cemetery loan.
1000.00	On church mortgage.
600.00	On $3500 church mortgage.
67.90	On church parlor carpet.
3000.00	Pipe organ.
213.00	Piano.
25.00	To missionary society.
6.96	For lumber.
330.00	For electric chandelier, etc.
$9157.80	

The other object for which the society was formed, to promote sociability, was not neglected while the members worked to help the church financially. For years the meetings were held at the homes of members, at all of which literary programs were rendered and sociability cultivated. All the pastors, Dr. Frear, Mr. Siegfried, Mr. Randall, Mr. Fulton, Mr. Richmond and the present pastor, Mr. DeLarme, have taken an active part and manifested a lively interest. A society that has worked so faithfully and well, for almost twenty-five years, should be encouraged and supported.

THE WOMAN'S MISSIONARY CIRCLE.

"Gods tabernacle
Shall fail of finish, though in order laid,
Unless ye women lift your hands to aid."

On April 4, 1875, Mrs. Rose Adams Bailey, a returned missionary, attended the forty-third anniversary of the Sunday school of the Baptist Church of Norristown, and after giving an enthusiastic address on the subject of missions, she invited the women to the evening prayer meeting for the purpose of forming a woman's missionary society. In accordance with Mrs. Bailey's request, thirty-three met her, and each pledged to give two cents a week to the support of the gospel in foreign lands. The pastor's wife, Mrs. George Frear, was chosen president, Miss Lizzie Clarke, secretary, and Miss Lemontine L. Stewart, treasurer. Miss Isabella Allabough, Miss Catharine Major and Mrs. Samuel Overholtzer were chosen solicitors. A meeting was held in the parsonage, on April 19, 1875, when the following constitution was adopted.

I. This association shall be called the Woman's Missionary Circle of the Norristown Baptist Church.

II. Its object shall be to aid the Woman's Baptist Foreign Missionary Society in the work prescribed by the constitution of that society.

III. Any person may become a member of the circle by contributing one dollar a year.

IV. Its officers shall be a president, secretary, treasurer and solicitors, performing the duties usually assigned to such officers.

V. All moneys raised by this circle shall be paid over by the treasurer to the general society named in the second article.

Within three months, the circle met with a great loss in the resignation of its efficient president, Mrs. George Frear, a woman of marked ability. Miss Mary A. Rees filled the chair, until the election of Mrs. Simeon Siegfried, September 20, 1875, who held the position until June 17, 1878. At the next annual meeting, Miss Rees was chosen president, and continued in office until March 15, 1880, when Mrs. N. B. Randall was elected president, and Miss Rees, vice-president.

Through the earnest efforts of Mrs. Randall, it was decided, on September 21, 1880, to unite the foreign and home interest. It was unanimously agreed:

I. That each member should have the privilege to decide whether her annual contribution should go to the foreign or home work.

II. All moneys raised by the circle for foreign missions should be paid into the Woman's Baptist Missionary Society, and all moneys raised for home missions should be paid into the Woman's Baptist Home Mission Union of Philadelphia.

In November, 1881, the first decided effort to raise money, aside from annual dues, was made. A circular letter, asking for contribution to missions, was sent to each sister in the church, and also an invitation to attend a praise meeting to be held December 12, 1881. The encouragement received from the pastor, the interest manifested by a large audience and a liberal donation from the people, led to other special endeavors, and thirty public meetings have been held, nearly all of which were addressed by eminent speakers, twenty of whom were laborers from mission fields.

Through these meetings and other earnest efforts, blessed by God, the circle has given to foreign missions one thousand

four hundred and sixty-one dollars and sixty-three cents, and to home missions, six hundred and two dollars, and to miscellaneous objects, two hundred and twenty-four dollars and fifty-one cents. With a single exception, (a gift to Philadelphia Training School,) the whole amount was raised by the Scriptural plan of voluntary offerings.

Mrs. Lizzie James, nee Clarke, resigned November 2, 1882, on account of her removal to Allentown. By this, the circle lost not only a good officer, but one who was ever ready to speak, work and give for the cause she loved. She fully illustrated that,

"The Gospel of a life like hers
Is more than books or scrolls."

The president appointed Miss Jennie Roberts secretary for the remainder of the year, and at the following annual meeting, Miss Ida M. Davis was chosen secretary, and served until December 14, 1891, when Miss E. Irene Clark was elected.

The meetings of the circle, for fourteen years, have been held monthly. For a short period the time was given to preparation of work for the Freedmen in the South, but with this exception, the sessions have been entirely devoted to the acquisition of missionary knowledge.

A mission band of twenty-five members was formed on November 10, 1886, and did efficient work for several years, under the direction of two members of the circle.

Mrs. N. B. Randall sent her resignation to the circle September 12, 1887. This was the cause of universal regret, for she was deeply interested in this department of Christian work, and her sound judgment, cultured mind and consecrated heart eminently fitted her for a leader.

Mrs. Charles A. Fulton was elected president, May 14, 1888, and served until November 8, 1888, when she entered

into eternal rest. Mrs. Fulton's labors in the circle were of short duration, but a glimpse was caught of her earnest life, her high attainments, her great simplicity, and the ineffable sweetness of character that Jesus gives to His beloved. Miss Mary A. Rees was elected president and Miss Mary J. Perry, vice-president, December 17, 1888.

Death and removals have made many changes, and only nine of the constituent members remain in the circle, which now numbers sixty-four. Miss Catharine Major has been a solicitor and Mrs. R. F. Hoffecker, nee Stewart, has been treasurer since its organization.

The last three years have been especially marked by a deep interest and increased liberality in giving. The adoption of the apportionment plan by the Woman's Baptist Foreign Missionary Society of the Central Union Association has led the circle to realize more fully that the gold and silver of earth belong to the Lord. And now, before any extra effort is made to solicit money to carry the news of salvation through Christ to a perishing world, a time is appointed for prayer. The humble petitions have been signally blessed by Him who said, "Go ye into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature."

THE DORCAS SOCIETY.

The Dorcas Society, which at this writing is one of the several valuable adjuncts to the work of the First Baptist Church, is the outgrowth of a movement instituted a number of years ago, and known as the missionary work of the Sunday School Association. While from year to year much was done by the few interested, it was thought that, if a society were regularly organized, with a name, its work would be better understood and systematized, the need of such a society for such work would be more fully realized and more and better work accomplished. Accordingly, in response to a call from the pastor, Rev. Charles A. Fulton, a number of ladies met in the church parlor, on the afternoon of May 14, 1889. After a backward glance over the work done and a careful statement of the present need, Mr. Fulton made a stirring appeal to the ladies, which resulted in their very enthusiastically effecting an organization, to be known as the Dorcas Society of the First Baptist Church of Norristown, Pa. A committee, consisting of Mrs. R. F. Hoffecker, Mrs. Emma Reed and Mrs. R. N. Wood, were appointed to draft a constitution and by-laws. These were adopted at the next meeting, held one month later, when Mrs. H. F. Scatchard was chosen president, and Mrs. Wm. M. Clift, Mrs. R. F. Hoffecker and Miss Annie McVaugh, respectively, vice-president, treasurer and secretary. For different causes, several who have served the society faithfully as its officers have resigned. The present incumbents are: president, Miss Mary J. Perry; vice-president, Mrs. R. N. Wood; treasurer, Miss I. M. Smith; and secretary, Miss Annie McVaugh.

The work of the society is, and always has been, that of looking after and supplying as nearly as practicable, the needs of the poor and unfortunate, not always of the congregation, but often those who have no special claim on the church and Sunday school, save their duty to all men, and of clothing some little ones in the orphanage, at Angora, Philadelphia. The society, in connection with other denominations, has assisted in supporting children placed in other homes in the same city. It has responded to appeals for help from sufferers from blight and drought in the far West, by sending clothing and other necessities, not forgetting the "word spoken in due season."

The receipts of the society, which have never been large, are obtained by the collection of monthly dues. They have been augmented, however, from time to time, as occasion demanded, by holding bread and cake sales, which have been generously patronized by the people of the church and those interested in the work. Valuable contributions of new and partly worn material have been made into comfortable and tasteful garments for the poor. So that cash receipts do not fully represent the money value of work done.

The society has never attempted great things. It has often been disappointed in those to whom it has extended its helping hand, while many, less promising, have been retained as beneficiaries and are doing well. And so the work goes quietly on, "Not knowing which shall prosper, this or that, or whether both alike shall be good;" but realizing, more and more, that, "Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these, ye have done it unto Me."

THE YOUNG PEOPLE'S SOCIETY OF CHRISTIAN ENDEAVOR.

The First Baptist Young People's Society of Christian Endeavor was organized, June 19, 1889, during the pastorate of Rev. Charles A. Fulton, who was the first president. As the work of Christian Endeavor Societies is done through committees, at the first business meeting committees were named and assigned their several functions. Believing that "in union is strength," application was made for admission in the Schuylkill Valley Union of Christian Endeavor. The International Christian Endeavor Convention was held in Philadelphia, on July ninth, tenth and eleventh of that year, and delegates were appointed to attend it.

In September, 1889, there were sixty members. This steadily increased until May, 1890, when there were ninety-five. Good meetings were held, but few being absent. But, like other organizations, there are times when it is at ebb tide, and so it was with this society. Many did not keep the pledge, but others have been faithful from the beginning, and by their faithfulness have tided the society over discouraging times.

The model constitution of the united society was adopted. The meetings were to be held every Wednesday evening, which was done, except a short time during the summer of 1892, when they were held on Sunday evening, one hour before the regular service. The last meeting night of every month was to be a consecration meeting. The business meeting was to be held the first Wednesday evening of every month, after prayer meeting. Collections are taken at every meeting.

It has been the aim of the society to work as near to the plan laid out as possible. Some excellent prayer meetings have been held. Some have taken the lead tremblingly, but have been rewarded by a growth and strength only obtained by doing the Lord's will. It has been a school for prayer and a more accurate knowledge of the Bible.

The Religious Literature Committee have distributed such papers as the National Baptist, Youth's Temperance Banner, Golden Rule, (the paper of the society,) Sunday School Times, King's Messengers, Ram's Horn, The Commonwealth, and other good literature that tended to uplift. These papers were sent to the State Hospital, Charity Hospital, the Almshouse, the Jail, barber shops and other places where they might be appreciated, or do good.

By means of occasional sociables, such as lawn parties, literary and musical entertainments, Christian sociability has been greatly enhanced.

The "White Ribboners" have also had a share of the work of the society. Recitations, lectures, music, and the experience of some in the line of temperance work, have been brought before the society from time to time.

In the spring of 1890, some of the members canvassed the east part of the town, and obtained promises of seventy-five members for the mission Sunday school, about to be started in that locality.

Another nice service rendered has been the decorating of the pulpit, every Sunday in the year, with plants and cut flowers. At the close of the services these are generally sent to the sick of the congregation.

The society has in many ways been a useful adjunct of the church. Its chief work, of course, has been the cultivation of the various Christian graces among young Christians. Through this agency, many young Christians have cultivated the important gifts of prayer and testimony in public meetings.

In the fall of 1896, a Junior Christian Endeavor was organized, with Miss Ida M. Davis as superintendent. This latest organization was a much needed branch. A large number of children met Saturday afternoons and were instructed by efficient leaders in the way of salvation, singing, temperance and missions. A Scripture lesson, illustrating some topic of Christian conduct, was taught at each meeting.

Pastors of the First Baptist Church, from 1833 to 1897.

Rev. W. H. Jordan—September, 1833, to April, 1834.
Rev. H. O. Wyer—July, 1834, to October, 1834.
Rev. Charles E. Wilson—January, 1835, to April, 1838.
Rev. David Bernard—June, 1838, to April, 1841.
Rev. Samuel Aaron—April, 1841, to June 1844.
Rev. I. N. Hobart—June, 1844, to July, 1846.
Rev. Hiram Hutchins—March, 1847, to January, 1850.
Rev. W. E. Cornwell—November, 1850, to June, 1852.
Rev. Roswell Cheney—July, 1854, to March, 1859.
Rev. Alfred Pinney—June, 1860, to November, 1862.
Rev. Hardin Wheat—July, 1863, to October, 1870.
Rev. George Frear—February, 1872, to June, 1875.
Rev. Simeon Siegfried—September, 1875, to October, 1879.
Rev. N. B. Randall—February, 1880, to September, 1887.
Rev C. A. Fulton—April, 1888, to February, 1891.
Rev. W. C. Richmond—November, 1891, to June, 1893.
Rev. Alonzo A. DeLarme—November, 1893.

RECORD.

Year	RECEIVED by Baptism	RECEIVED by Letter	Total Membership	Year	RECEIVED by Baptism	RECEIVED by Letter	Total Membership
33	50	10	87	66	19	27	303
34	55	5	145	67	9	14	317
35	38	6	178	68	39	16	358
36	5	7	175	69	6	15	368
37	4	15	176	70	102	3	486
38	24	8	194	71	2	3	457
39	32	15	230	72	12	10	444
40	39	10	263	73	4	8	437
41	33	13	291	74	12	11	443
42	8	18	305	75	17	22	458
43	46	12	339	76	24	8	470
44	0	5	323	77	24	10	475
45	0	11	264	78	2	4	459
46	2	12	254	79	32	13	489
47	0	10	238	80	44	19	510
48	18	10	249	81	35	5	533
49	28	7	266	82	52	1	576
50	31	7	284	83	12	13	574
51	13	11	292	84	4	10	567
52	8	9	286	85	20	19	590
53	5	3	258	86	14	12	602
54	1	6	254	87	15	20	619
55	25	20	280	88	2	2	543
56	1	7	274	89	32	13	540
57	8	15	278	90	67	10	602
58	4	4	274	91	7	3	571
59	10	6	272	92	23	12	587
60	13	8	265	93	13	3	564
61	3	4	256	94	51	10	608
62	3	7	244	95	38	8	619
63	2	9	227	96	22	8	633
64	25	15	247	97	66	4	680
65	11	17	267				

Date Due

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